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TIP TOP WEEKLY

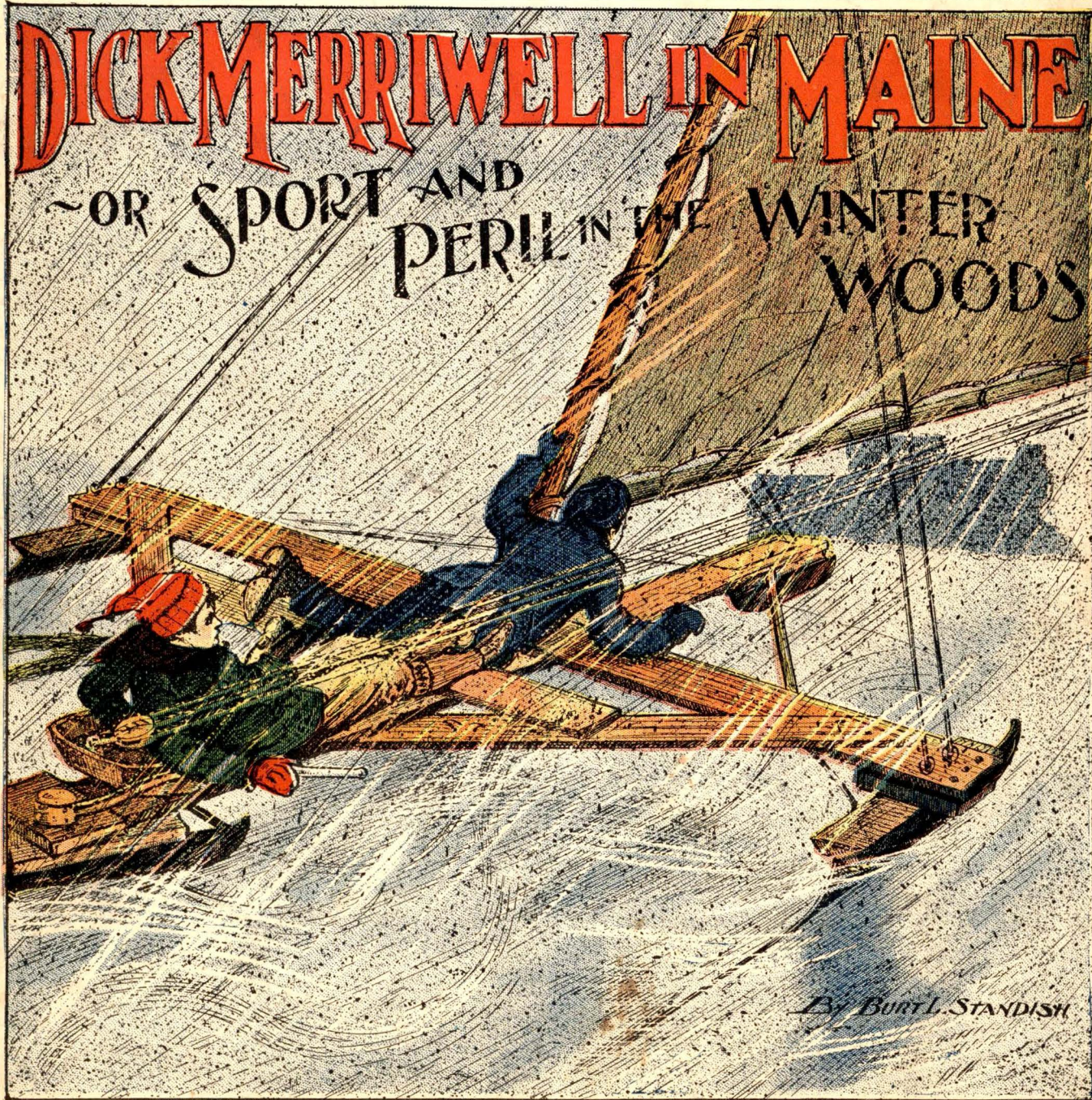
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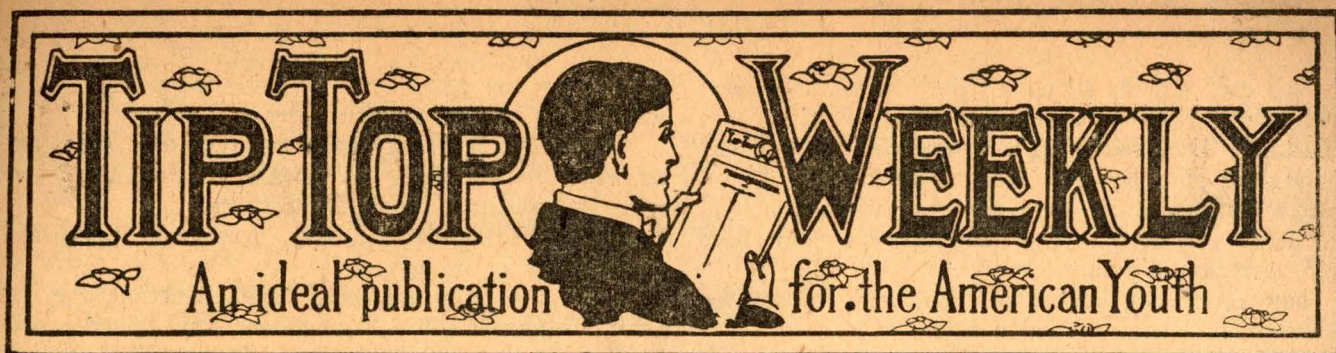
No. 509

NEW YORK, JANUARY 13, 1906.

Price, Five Cents



Again that terrible blood-chilling shriek smote their ears, and suddenly, directly before them, a huge and monstrous shape loomed dimly in the driving storm.



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NEW YORK, January 13, 1906.

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DICK MERRIWELL IN MAINE;

OR,

Sport and Peril in the Winter Woods.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

AN ENCOUNTER IN THE WOODS.

The morning air was crisp and biting in the winter woods. Snow lay deep upon the ground.

Picking a twisted course amid the irregular ranks of the tall, stately pines, Dick Merriwell set out from camp, with an ax upon his shoulder. Brad Buckhart had used the last of the dry wood to cook breakfast that morning, and Dick promised to bring in a fresh supply.

Over his other clothes, young Merriwell had slipped a huge fur coat, belonging to Zeb Piper, the guide. He wore a fur cap upon his head. On his feet were snow-shoes, which he skilfully manipulated.

His eyes were bright and clear, and his cheeks soon grew ruddy from the cool, tingling kiss of the crisp air. Each breath exhaled became faint visible vapor and then vanished.

The great woods were still. All those tall trees, stretching away rank on rank until they closed the vista

to the eye, seemed waiting and listening expectantly. The hush of anticipation was over everything.

During the midwinter holidays, at the invitation of Earl Gardner, Dick Merriwell, Brad Buckhart, and Obediah Tubbs made a visit to Earl's home in Calais, Maine. After spending a few days there, the boys decided on a hunting trip in the vicinity of Moosehead Lake, where they now were, having employed as guide Zeb Piper, a queer old character, who knew that region thoroughly.

Piper had left on the previous day for Greenville, with the intention of bringing in certain supplies to Pine Cottage.

Dick soon discovered a pine that had broken near the butt and fallen in a half-supported, half-reclining position against two other trees. This looked like good, dry wood to him, and he paused beside it, swinging the ax from his shoulder, with the intention of striking it into the dead pine.

Suddenly, with a nerve-jerking ping, something flew

past his ear, and the silence of the forest was broken by the clear, ringing report of a rifle.

Instantly Dick fell upon the snow close to the butt of the dead pine, behind which he crouched.

At a distance there were cries of satisfaction, and two persons came hurrying bungingly on snow-shoes in the direction of young Merriwell.

They were boys, neither of them being more than seventeen, and each carried a rifle.

"Hold on, Mortimer!" beseechingly cried one, as he nearly tripped over his snow-shoes. "Don't be in thuch a dweadful hurwy. I thot the bear; he'th mine."

"Perhaps you didn't kill him, Oscar," said the boy in advance. "You know a wounded bear is a dangerous creature. Better be ready to shoot again."

"Two jackasses!" muttered Dick Merriwell angrily. "The crazy fools took me for a bear."

"I thee him, Mortimer!" yelled the boy with the lisp, wildly flourishing his rifle. "I thaw him peep out from behind that twee! He'th hiding, Mortimer; look out faw him! He'th going to jump out and scwatch you! He'll bite you!"

The lad in advance paused and half lifted his rifle, cocking it as he did so.

"I saw him stir myself," he said. "We must finish him before we go any nearer. You move off to the right, Oscar, and I'll move to the left. Then he won't be able to hide behind the butt of that tree."

Dick decided that it was about time for him to speak up.

"Hold on, you lunatics!" he cried hotly. "What are you trying to do, anyhow?"

The strangers halted in their tracks, with exclamations of astonishment.

"Good gwahtuth!" gasped the one called Oscar. "That wathn't a bear! Bearth can't talk, Mortimer, deah boy."

"By George, Flutterby," exclaimed the other, "I'm afraid you fired at a man!"

"Well, it looked jutht like a bear. It wath a big hairwy cwecher."

Dick ventured to lift his head above the trunk of the tree.

"You're a fine pair of sportsmen!" he said sarcastically. "You belong to the class that brings ridicule on city chaps who hunt in these woods."

"I gueth it wathn't a bear after all, Mortimer," said the lisping fellow, in a regretful tone of voice. "I'm awfully thorwy, doncher know. I'd jutht love to thoot a bear."

Dick stood up.

"What you need is a good spanking," he said. "You'd better go home to marmer."

This seemed to greatly displease both of the strangers.

"He's a very insolent fellow," observed the one called Mortimer.

"That'th tho," lisped the other chap. "I don't like the way he talkth to uth."

Leaving the ax where he had dropped it, Dick walked out toward the strangers.

"You'd like it less if you were to receive what you deserve," he declared. "Who are you, anyhow? and what do you mean by shooting at me?"

"Why, he'th weal tharth, Mortimer," piped the smaller one of the pair.

"He's decidedly insolent," said Mortimer, eying Dick disapprovingly. "Look here, my fellow, what business have you around here, anyhow?"

"That's none of your business!" flung back Dick. "I don't suppose you own these woods."

"Well, I want to tell you something," retorted the other. "My father owns them. He has timber claims all over this region. Maybe you've heard of Augustus Sturtevant?"

"Can't say that I have," admitted Dick.

"Thuch ignowance!" sneered the lisper.

"Everybody has heard of Augustus Sturtevant, the great timber king," said the other. "Mr. Sturtevant is my father. My name is Mortimer Sturtevant. You see, my fellow, we have a perfect right to hunt here. This is my friend, Oscar Flutterby. We're with a party of Kent's Hill boys over at Sebooos Joe's Twin Camps. Now that I have made this explanation, will you be kind enough to follow my example?"

"My name is Merriwell, and I'm with a party at Zeb Piper's Camp."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" cried young Sturtevant. "Well, now I want you to understand that you're trespassing. Piper has been warned away from here."

"I was not aware," said Dick, "that a man who owned timber rights could prevent licensed men from shooting on his preserve. Your father hasn't bought the land, has he?"

Instead of answering this question, Sturtevant demanded:

"Have you a license?"

"Certainly."

"I'd like to see it."

"If you'll just come over to Piper's Camp, I'll show it to you," said Dick, who felt like exhibiting Sturtevant and Flutterby to his chums.

"I don't think I'll take the trouble," said the son of the timber king. "You'd better bring your license over to our camp and show it."

Dick laughed until the woods rang.

"You seem to be a humorous chap," he observed. "You go out shooting at human beings for bears, and then you expect them to chase you around to display their sportsman's license. You really ought to be caged. It would be much safer for hunters in these parts."

"Thay!" cried Oscar Flutterby shrilly. "Are you going to thtand that, Mortimer? Are you going to take that tharth off thuch a fellow?"

"I don't like it!" growled young Sturtevant.

"Well," smiled Dick, "if you don't like it, you know what you can do."

"Mortimer, deah boy," palpitated Flutterby, "I am

going to give him a weal hard thlap! I've jutht got to thlap him! I can't thtand it another minute."

He waddled forward awkwardly on the snow-shoes, while Dick stood still, watching him, with a faint smile of curious indifference. On approaching within reach, the fellow lifted his left hand, and, with a singular jerk, struck Dick lightly on the shoulder.

"There!" he cried. "Now you take that, you horwid tharthy feller!"

Out shot Merriwell's hand, from which he had suddenly pulled a big leather-backed mitten. His fingers grasped Flutterby's collar, and, with a jerk, he actually snapped the fellow off his snow-shoes.

Oscar uttered a squawk, which was smothered a moment later as young Merriwell pitched him headlong in the snow, into which he plunged to his waist, his legs kicking wildy in the air, and sending up a miniature geyser of white crystals.

CHAPTER II.

BUCKHART CALLS A BLUFF.

The sight was really a ludicrous one, and Dick's anger suddenly turned to merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he cried. "Oh, ha, ha ha!"

The woods echoed with this burst of musical, boyish laughter.

"How dare you!" cried Mortimer Sturtevant furiously.

Oscar Flutterby floundered about, and finally succeeded in rising to his knees, being covered with a white coating which made him look like a genuine snow man. He spluttered, and blew snow from his mouth and nostrils, at last managing to gasp:

"The horwid, wude cwecher!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, ha, ha, ha!" again rang out Dick's laughter.

"Where ith my wifle, Mortimer?" cried Oscar. "I'm going to point it wight at him!"

The rifle had disappeared in the snow, and Flutterby pawed around until he found it, whereupon he rose to his feet, standing nearly to his hips in the white spread which covered the ground, and half lifted the weapon, in a threatening manner.

Dick pointed a finger at the fellow, and sharply cried:

"Don't you do it! If you aim that rifle at me, I'll give you the worst spanking of your life!"

"Good gwathuth! I weally believe he'd do it, doncher know! What are you doing, Mortimer, deah boy? Didn't you thee him throw me in the thnow? Why don't you jutht go up and thtrike him a weal hard whack?"

"I wouldn't advise Mortimer to try it," said Dick grimly. "If he does, I'll not handle him as gently as I did you."

"If I ever struck you, you wouldn't be able to handle me at all!" snapped Sturtevant furiously. "I want

you to know that you'll be sorry for such outrageous conduct! You'll regret it, my insolent fellow! Your name is Merriwell, is it?"

"That's correct," nodded Dick, as he pulled on his heavy mittens to protect his hands.

"Seems to me I've heard that name before, but I have a fancy it's not your real name."

"You're welcome to have any sort of a fancy you like."

"I remember now; it's the name of that famous Yale athlete. Let me see, he was Frank Merriwell. I don't presume you claim relationship to him, do you?"

"Perhaphth he'll thay he'th Fwank Merriwell him-thelf!" sneered Oscar, as he made a bungling attempt to get once more upon his snow-shoes.

"Frank Merriwell is my brother," declared Dick, with a touch of pride.

Sturtevant betrayed some surprise, which was followed by a look of incredulity.

"Bah!" he sneered. "Tell that to the marines! Your brother, indeed! Now it's my turn to laugh!"

He did laugh, in a forced, scornful manner.

Dick turned back to the tree, and picked up his ax.

"I've spent too much time bothering with you," he said. "I'm looking for some dry wood, and I've found it here."

He swung the ax in the air, and drove the keen blade, with a ringing chug, into the dry trunk of the pine.

"Stop where you are!" cried Mortimer Sturtevant. "Now you are trespassing! My father owns the timber rights here, and that tree belongs to him."

"Is that so?" asked Dick, with assumed dismay.

"Yes, that's so. You can't take a chip from it. If you do, you'll find yourself in trouble with the law!"

"I believe a man who secures timber rights buys every standing stick," said Dick. "You'll take particular notice that this is not standing. It's a fallen tree. Go about your business, and don't bother me any more!"

As he said this, he slipped off the heavy fur coat and flung it over the trunk of the tree, after which he earnestly applied himself to the task of cutting wood.

"He weally defith you, Mortimer!" piped Flutterby. "What do you think of that, deah boy?"

"I think he'll get all he wants before I'm through with him!" snarled Sturtevant furiously. "I'll land him in the county jail!"

Dick did not seem to hear a word of this. He continued to chop wood as if quite alone and undisturbed.

Sturtevant decided on a last desperate bluff. Lifting his own rifle, he pointed it at Merriwell, savagely commanding him to cease chopping.

"It's my duty to protect my father's rights!" he shouted. "If you don't stop, I'll fire!"

"Now, say," called another voice, "I wouldn't do any shooting, if I were in your place, stranger. If you don't lower that rifle, I'll sure let a little of this

cool air blow through your system! You hear me gently murmur?"

The speaker was Brad Buckhart, who had approached unobserved, and was standing a few rods away, the butt of a rifle against his shoulder and the drop covering Mortimer Sturtevant.

The moment Sturtevant realized the weapon was aimed straight at him, he uttered a cry of fear, and quickly lowered his own rifle.

"Be careful, be careful!" he cried. "You might shoot me by accident! You have no right to handle a rifle in such a careless manner!"

"Oh, I'm a heap careful the way I handle it," retorted Buckhart. "I'm a whole lot familiar with a shooting-iron of this sort, and I'll bet a bunch of Texan long-horns that I can clip the lobes off your ears with a couple of shots."

"Oh, land thaketh!" gasped Flutterby, shaking with fear. "Ithn't he a weal wëckless bwute!"

"You won't have to do any shooting, Brad!" called Dick. "These chaps are great bluffers."

"Well, I sure call their bluff, pard!" came from the Texan. "Whatever is it all about?"

He advanced slowly and clumsily on the snow-shoes, betraying that he was quite unfamiliar with the use of them.

"Let'th go wight away, Mortimer, deah boy," urged Flutterby. "There'th no telling what theth thavage wetcheth may do."

"All right," said Sturtevant fiercely, "we'll depart. Let them go ahead with their trespassing. They'll be sorry for this piece of work! Come, Oscar!"

He turned, with as much dignity as he could command, and started away, Flutterby following after.

"Whoever are those interesting young gents, and what was their game?" inquired Buckhart.

Dick explained, briefly telling what had taken place.

The Texan's indignation was boundless when he heard how the boys from Twin Camps had mistaken Merriwell for a bear and nearly shot him.

"If I'd known that," he growled, "I sure would have sailed into them all spraddled out! So this fellow Sturtevant claims we have no right to cut wood here, does he?"

"Yes, but he knows better. His father owns the standing timber. We have no right to chop down a standing tree, but we can cut up any fallen stuff that has not been properly logged. How did you happen to come along just now?"

"Why, I heard a shot, and thought I'd investigate. Looked around, and saw you hadn't taken your rifle. Therefore I knew you were not the one who did the shooting. I left Gardner and Tubbs trying to make the fire burn."

"Well, we'll soon furnish them with wood that will burn," said Dick, as he clipped off stick after stick. "This stuff is dry and full of resin. It will make a roaring fire."

In a short time he had cut enough to give them both a load. Buckhart picked up an armful, while Merri-

well slipped on the overcoat. Dick gathered what wood remained, secured the ax, and they started back for Piper's Camp.

CHAPTER III.

PIPER'S CAMP.

Dropping his armful of wood outside, Dick opened the door of the cook-room, and looked in.

Obediah Tubbs, the fat boy, was on his knees before the stove, his cheeks pursed out like an inflated toy balloon, as he blew furiously at the fire. With each puff of his breath a burst of smoke from the stove struck him in the face. Tears were dropping from his eyes.

Behind Obediah, in the doorway of the main room, stood Earl Gardner, literally convulsed with laughter.

"Blow, Obediah! Blow, you rascal!" cried Earl. "Why, you haven't enough breath in you to put life into a spark! Can't you make that fire burn?"

"Dern its picter! I'll make it burn, or I'll blow the whole business up the chimney!" piped the fat boy, in his peculiar, high-pitched voice.

"That's right, blow—blow!" urged Gardner.

Tubbs settled back a bit, and took in a deep breath, which he exhaled in one great, furious puff.

The stove seemed resentful at such treatment, for, in return, it belched forth another burst of smoke and a shower of ashes, which struck Obediah in the face and covered his head and shoulders.

"Wow!" squealed the fat boy. "Gee whiz! She soaked me that time! Got it in both eyes! There's ashes in my nose and cinders in my throat! By Jim, I bet the chimney is plugged up!"

"You're getting weak, Obed," said Dick. "What you need is a piece of pie to revive your strength."

Obediah sat back on his heels, and clasped both hands to his stomach.

"Who said pie?" he yelled. "Oh, Jingo! I'd give fifty cents for a slab of good squash pie! Yum, yum! It would go right to the proper spot!" He rubbed the ashes out of his smarting eyes, and gazed at Dick with the pathetic expression of a dying calf.

"I'm purty gol-dinged nigh pumped out!" he moaned. "Gardner's had me playing the bellows ever sence you went out after wood. Never see such an obstinate stove in all my born days! I hope you found something that'll burn."

"Yes, we ran up against something pretty hot!" laughed Dick. "Here, Brad, dump your armful back of the stove."

Buckhart had succeeded in freeing his feet from the snow-shoes, and he entered the cook-room, throwing down the load of dry wood.

"Here, move away from that stove!" he cried. "Let me get at it. I'll sure show you how to start a fire in short order."

He removed the covers, and began blowing out the smoldering sticks of green wood, flinging them through

the open door and into the snow outside. Next he picked out some dry splinters, and carefully placed them on the coals, where they quickly ignited. Then he thrust in several dry sticks, and, when the covers were replaced, the stove gave forth a merry crackling and roaring sound.

"Well, dad bim the old thing! I'm glad she's gittin' onto her job!" said Obediah. "It'll take me two hours to git the cinders out of my eyes and nose. You're to blame for it, Earl Gardner!"

"You didn't seem to have much trouble in finding wood that would burn," said Earl.

"Oh, I had some trouble," retorted Merriwell.

Then he told them of his adventure with Sturtevant and Flutterby.

"Dern their picters!" squeaked Obediah. "We oughter go over and give them fellers a good wal-lopin'!"

"If they let us alone in future," said Dick, "we won't interfere with them."

"But I certain have a premonition that they won't let us alone," put in Buckhart. "That galoot, Sturtevant, was a whole lot riled. He actually seemed to think we were trespassers."

"I guess everybody in Maine has heard of Augustus Sturtevant," said Gardner. "He's a very rich man, and he's made lots of his money in questionable ways. He's overbearing, too. Runs things up here in the woods to suit himself. If any one bothers him, he simply pushes them aside. They had a merry old war last winter over on the West Branch, where his crew and the crew of another big lumberman fought each other tooth and nail for two months. Sturtevant won out in the end. A logger on the opposing side was killed during the trouble. He was the leader, and there were nasty stories afloat that Sturtevant gave orders to his roughest and dirtiest men to put the fellow out of the way. They tried to prove it in court, but Augustus Sturtevant had plenty of money, and some people declare that he bought the judge, jury, and lawyers. I presume that his son takes after him in his overbearing and insolent ways."

"Where does Augustus Sturtevant hail from?" asked Dick.

"He has a house in Bangor, but he votes in Boston. If young Sturtevant can get hold of his father, he's liable to induce the old man to drive us away from here."

"Well, now, if any one tries that," growled Buckhart, "he's certain going to have a tough job on his hands! We've paid for our licenses, and we've got a right to camp and hunt here."

"Right doesn't cut much ice with might in the Maine woods," said Gardner. "Why, old Sturtevant ruined the North Carry Railroad Company."

"What's the North Carry Railroad Company?" questioned Dick.

"Oh, it was a concern who formed a scheme of building a railroad across North Carry. They had a locomotive shipped to Greenville, and were going to

take it across the ice last winter, but she's still in Greenville. Sturtevant fought the surveyors and construction crew, and bought off his dangerous enemies, finally driving the North Carry Company out of business."

"He seems to be the king of the woods," laughed Dick. "Well, it isn't likely he's anywhere in these parts, and I fancy we can hold our own with Mortimer."

"You bet your boots we can!" put in Buckhart. "Here, Obed, you sylphlike gazelle, take this pan and fill her with snow. Put it on the stove to melt, and keep filling it until we get water enough to wash these dishes."

"Say, by Jim!" piped the fat chap, "I'm a kinder chore boy, ain't I? I do everything the rest of you fellers don't want to do, don't I?"

"What did we bring you along for?" chuckled Dick.

"What did you bring me along for? By thutter! I came to shoot moose and deer and bears and big game."

"You won't find many bears prowling around in this weather," said Gardner. "They're taking their winter nap just about now."

"Sturtevant and Flutterby didn't seem to think of that," said Dick. "They had an idea that bears were prowling around promiscuously, regardless of the weather."

Tubbs brought in a panful of snow, which began snapping and spluttering as soon as it was placed on the stove. He kept it supplied with fresh snow until Brad informed him there was enough. In the meantime, Buckhart rolled up his sleeves, and prepared for work.

"I sure am going to see that these dishes are clean," he said. "I've camped out before now when the dishes were washed once a week. Every man had a plate of his own. When he got through eating, he took his finger and marked his initials in the grease on his plate, so he wouldn't get some other fellow's dish next meal. That don't go in this camp."

"I should say not," laughed Dick.

"By Jim!" put in Obed, "I think that's a purty good idee. What's the good of working when you don't have to?"

"Now you get up here!" roared the Texan, pointing to the fat boy, who had settled on a chair in the adjoining room—"get up and prepare to wipe these dishes. You're it! You'll polish 'em, too. I want you to use plenty of elbow-grease, and rub every dish until it shines like a mirror."

"Excuse me!" moaned Obed, as he wearily dragged himself to his feet. "I wish I hadn't spoke."

With Buckhart looking after it, the dishes were thoroughly washed and properly wiped. This done, the boys sat around for awhile and chatted.

Tubbs suddenly leaped into the air, uttered a squeal, and cracked his heels together.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAT BOY TRIES SNOW-SHOEING.

"What struck you?" asked Gardner.

"I just thought of something!" chuckled the fat boy. "I'm going out and practise walking on snow-shoes. I've got to git used to the tarnal things if I'm going to do any hunting."

"That's a good idea," nodded Dick, a twinkle in his eyes.

"Fine!" agreed Brad. "We'll go out and see what you can do, Obed."

A few moments later they were outside, and Dick was assisting Tubbs to adjust a pair of snow-shoes to his feet.

A person who has had no experience finds snow-shoes decidedly awkward to manipulate. An expert handles them with ease, and covers ground rapidly. If he is thoroughly proficient, he can run on them under fairly favorable conditions. The amateur's first attempt to get about on the things is almost certain to be a ludicrous exhibition.

When he was ready, Obediah straightened up smilingly.

"Anybody oughter handle these things," he chuckled. "You can't make me believe they're so tarnal hard to walk on. I bet a punkin pie I can jest skim around on 'em as slick as a whistle."

Tubbs took three steps. Then one of his snow-shoes got planted on the other, and, when he tried to lift his foot, he lost his balance, and plunged his arms at full length into the snow.

"We-e-e-e-e!" he squealed. "Who tripped me then? That ain't no fair! If you fellers are goin' to play tricks on me, I won't walk on 'em no more!"

"You tripped yourself," laughed Dick. "We weren't near you."

"Well, say!" called Obed. "How do I get up? Can't seem to recover my equilibrium."

"Wait a minute," said Merriwell. "I'll give you a lift."

He seized the fat boy by the collar, and pulled him upright.

"Now look out not to step on your own feet," he said. "Don't stick to the path; strike out anywhere. That's right. Go ahead. Now you're showing us how it's done."

"Didn't I tell you I would?" cackled Obediah triumphantly, as he waddled along in an agonizing manner. "I knew I could do it, by Jim! Wait a minute, and you'll see me scootin' around among these trees jest as if I had skates on my feet."

The three boys watched him, uttering exclamations of admiration for his benefit. They urged him on, encouraging him to move faster and faster.

Suddenly the fat boy again tripped himself, and this time he plunged into a soft bed of snow, not only his arms disappearing from view, but his head and shoulders also. He floundered about wildly, succeeding in

getting his right foot free from the snow-shoe and waving it frantically in the air.

Buckhart roared.

"Look at Obey's signal of distress!"

Gradually the fat boy's efforts became less and less frantic, and finally he relapsed limply.

"Think we'd better pull him out," said Dick.

When they pulled Tubbs out, he appeared nearly finished. It was some moments before he succeeded in getting the snow out of his mouth and nose and inhaling a full breath. Then he sat up, with the white bank around him to his waist, gazing resentfully at his friends.

"Why didn't ye let me alone jest ten seconds longer?" he piped faintly. "I'd been dead by that time! You're a fine lot, you are!"

"How do you like walking on snow-shoes?" asked Dick.

"Drat the things! They ain't fit for nobody to walk on! Look here, Dick, they ain't the same kind of snow-shoes you use. You can't fool me! Oh, laugh—laugh! It's all right!"

"Oh, come on, Obed, you were doing finely. Get up, and try it again."

"You go to grass!" yelled Tubbs angrily. ("Having a regular circus with me, ain't ye? Jest laughin' yourselves sore over me, ain't ye? Well, by Jim! I'll do my practisin' some other time, when you fellers ain't around. Now don't you try to hook me onto them things again. I won't stand it! I'll wade back to camp.")

Wade he did, floundering through the snow until he reached the hard-packed lot in front of the camp.

"Are you going to leave those snow-shoes out there?" asked Dick.

"Yes, drat 'em!" yelled the fat boy. "They can stay there and rot, for all of me!"

Then he plunged into the camp.

Merriwell picked up the snow-shoes, and they followed Obediah inside, where they proceeded to rally him for some time.

They were still laughing over Tubbs, when suddenly, without warning, the door was flung open, and a tall, dusky, black-haired man stepped in. At a glance, they saw it was a half-blood Indian. He had a rifle in his hands. Three feet inside the open door, he halted, surveying the boys with a savage, scowling expression.

Naturally Dick and his friends sprang up in surprise.

"Who are you?" demanded Merriwell.

"Me Seboois Joe," was the answer. "Me come to make you git."

"That's right!" cried another voice. "And we're here to back him up!"

Mortimer Sturtevant appeared in the doorway. Behind Sturtevant were six more boys, one of whom was Oscar Flutterby.

"The Twin Camps crowd!" muttered Dick.

CHAPTER V.

THE FOOTBALL SIGNAL.

The half-blood was a fierce-looking man, and he glared at the boys in his most savage manner. Evidently he expected to intimidate them at the very start.

Obediah Tubbs, however, was the only one who betrayed signs of alarm.

Dick stepped out promptly, and placed himself before Seboois Joe, while Buckhart stood quite still where he had risen, his hands on his hips. Earl Gardner's face flushed with indignation, and he stepped forward to place himself at Dick's shoulder and a little to the rear.

Outside the door, the boys from Twin Camps pushed closer, in an effort to look into the room.

Oscar Flutterby tried to hold them back.

"Keep thtill, fellowth!" he lisped. "Mortimer told uth to let him and Joe thettle thith matter. If them nathty chaps twy any wuff-houth bithneth, we'll wuth wight in, and knock the thtuffing out of 'em!"

Suddenly Buckhart broke loose.

"Whoop!" he roared. "Whatever is this bunch I see? Here's a lot of unbranded calves, led by the old long-horn steer himself! Pard, it's up to us to put our stamp on these youthful mavericks. It's a sinftl shame to let them go rampaging over the range without anybody's signature on their hides."

The Texan was actually steaming for trouble. He felt outraged by the intrusion, and longed to express his emotions by vigorous action.

Without turning his head, Merriwell made a gesture that repressed his energetic chum.

"Look here, Mr. Seboois Joe," he said, in a quiet, firm tone of voice, "we've hired this camp, and paid for it. For the time being, it's practically our property, and you're an intruder here. You came in without knocking, and without being invited."

"That's whatever!" substantiated Buckhart.

The half-blood scowled still more savagely, if possible.

"Me know my business," he declared gutturally. "Sturtevant boy his father own all around here. No 'low sportsmen to shoot here. Me guard. Me take care of property. Sturtevant boss he tell Guide Piper not to come here some more—not to bring nobody. Guide Piper he pay no 'tention. He git in much trouble. You cut tree belong to Sturtevant boss. That settle it. You go—you go quick! You don't git out, Joe he take you by the neck, and put you out. He tell Sturtevant boy he come here and do it by himself. Don't want no help. Sturtevant boy he say he come see how it is done."

"That's right," grinned Mortimer Sturtevant. "We all came along to see the fun."

Merriwell surveyed the youthful speaker from his head to his feet and back again. There was both amusement and disdain in the glance.

"I presume you expect to see a lot of sport, Sturte-

vant," he observed. "What are you going to do? Are you going to rush us right off without further notice? Aren't you going to give us time to pack up?"

"We'll help you pack!" chuckled Mortimer. "If you're willing, we'll see that your dunnage is ready for totting inside of ten minutes. If you're not willing—Well, we'll throw you and your truck out into the snow, and set fire to this old shack."

"That right," put in Seboois Joe.

"So you propose to proceed in a most high-handed and unlawful manner," said Dick, apparently quite undisturbed. "I believe this is the usual Sturtevant style of doing things in these parts. As far as I can learn, your father is a lawbreaker, and would find himself in serious trouble if his victims dared rise and push matters against him."

"Don't talk about law here," cut in Mortimer disdainfully. "You've a great deal to learn, young fellow. You've yet to learn that there is a law of the woods. Up here men settle their own differences in whatever manner they choose. We didn't come here to discuss this matter with you. We're not going to bandy words. You made an assault on my friend Flutterby to-day. That's sufficient provocation."

"That'th wight, Mortimer, deah boy!" piped Oscar, stepping into the doorway. "Give it to the wuffian! Jutht tell him what you mean, and we'll back you up, by gwathuth!"

"Yes, we'll back you up!" cried the boys outside. "We don't want those fellows here, and they'll have to move!"

"What if we decline to move?" asked Dick, who was fencing for time, while his brain actively sought the proper method of meeting the enemy.

"We've told you what that means!" exclaimed Sturtevant. "You'd better not be foolish. If I say the word, Joe will walk into you, and clean you all out. He's the man who whipped the whole crew at Kilmer's Lumber Camp, No. 2. There were thirteen of them, including the cookee."

"Mr. Seboois seems to be the real thing," muttered Buckhart, who found it impossible to keep still.

"By Jim!" piped Obediah Tubbs, who had recovered his composure, and now came waddling forward. "He most scares me to death jest giving me the eye. Look at me tremble. I'm shaking all over."

"This is outrageous, Merriwell!" said Gardner, in a low tone. "We can't submit to it!"

"I don't propose to submit," spoke Dick, under his breath. "We'll fight. Are you ready?"

Buckhart caught the word fight, and understood Dick's meaning. Merriwell saw the Texan gathering himself for the critical moment.

Dick felt that it would not do to give the enemy warning of their intention. Whatever they accomplished must be done instantly and by united action. How could he call on his companions to back him up, without letting the intruders know what they meant to do?

An idea flashed electrically through his head.

"Seventeen — two — twenty-eight — thirty-four — seven!" he called quickly.

It was a football signal, and it called for a mass formation and a charge into center.

Buckhart, Gardner, and Tubbs understood, and they were in motion even as the final number left Dick's lips. Together, the four boys hurled themselves against Seboois Joe, literally lifting him off his feet and flinging him backward upon Mortimer Sturtevant, who was sent reeling into Flutterby's arms. The charge swept them all out through the open doorway.

"Back!" cried Dick. "Close the door!"

Slam!

The heavy door was closed and barred in a twinkling.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ATTACK REPULSED.

Buckhart uttered a cowboy yell that almost lifted the roof.

"Whoop! whoopee!" he cried, cracking his heels together. "That was the way to do it! That jarred them some, I opine! Say, pard, you certain had your wits in full working order just about then."

"I was not the only one," laughed Dick. "You fellows caught on promptly enough to make it a decided success."

"By Jim!" piped the delighted fat boy, "we'll have to tell the fellers at school about our great football play in the Maine woods."

"Hear the racket outside," said Gardner. "They seem to be somewhat excited."

"Listen!" urged Dick, lifting his hand and bending an ear toward the door. "You can hear Sturtevant—you can hear what he's saying."

The voice of Mortimer Sturtevant reached their ears. He was calling on Seboois Joe, and asking the half-blood if he was seriously hurt.

"He, he, he!" snickered Tubbs. "Seboois got it in his bread-basket!"

"That Indian is dangerous," declared Dick gravely. "If I ever saw a murderous countenance, he has one. He is the kind of man who never forgets and never forgives. He'll watch his chance to get even with an enemy."

"I haven't got any use for an Injun, anyhow," said Buckhart. "Never saw but one who was any good."

"You mean old Joe Crowfoot," said Dick. "If Joe was here now, he would be a valuable addition to our force. I'd pit him against Seboois Joe any day, and guarantee that he would outwit Seboois, and make him look like a plugged quarter."

Suddenly there were several shots, and they distinctly heard bullets striking the logs of the cabin.

"Now, if they're going to try that," said Dick, "we'll have to meet them half-way."

There was a sharp, jangling crash of glass, and a

face appeared at the broken window. It was Mortimer Sturtevant, who shouted furiously:

"You've cooked your goose, you fools!"

Obediah Tubbs made a hurried dash for the cook-room. The others fancied the fat boy was going to see that the back door was securely fastened.

"Come on, fellows!" snarled Sturtevant. "I've got 'em! We'll climb right in at this window!"

Then he flourished a pistol, with which he threatened the boys inside the camp.

"Keep back!" he commanded. "If you don't, you'll get something out of this!"

"It's a bluff, pard," growled Brad. "He wouldn't dare to shoot, anyhow."

Tubbs came out of the cook-room, with a long-handled dipper in his hand. Steam was rising from the dipper. The fat boy slipped along the wall in the direction of the broken window; while Sturtevant watched Dick and the others. Taking careful aim, Obed gave a flirt of the dipper, and sent its contents at the face in the window.

There was a yell of pain, and Mortimer Sturtevant dropped from view.

"Te, he, he!" snickered Obediah. "Hot water don't seem to agree with that feller."

"Score one for Tubbs!" cried Dick. "There's an inside shutter to that window; I think we'll have to close it."

The shutter was promptly closed and hasped. This made it so dark within the cabin that the boys found it necessary to light a lamp.

Listening, they heard the enemy still talking excitedly on the outside. Some one hammered furiously on the door, and uttered fierce threats.

"They'll get sick of that after awhile," said Dick. "We may as well take it easy. We're comfortable in here, and it's decidedly cold out there."

At intervals for more than thirty minutes they heard the sound of voices, although there was no further assault upon the camp. Tubbs rolled into one of the bunks, and proceeded to sleep and snore in the most tranquil manner.

"Is this the peaceful little outing you promised us up in the Maine woods, Gardner?" asked Dick smilingly. "Why, we fancied we were going off away from everybody, where it would be so placid and lonesome that we'd rejoice when we came out and obtained sight of a human being."

"Of course I didn't count on this," said Earl. "I think I know some of those fellows. If I'm not mistaken, one of them is from Calais. His name is Crabtree, and he attends school at Kent's Hill."

"Whatever is Kent's Hill?" asked Buckhart.

"It's a prep school. Kent's Hill and Hebron are the two best in the State. Father wanted to send me to Kent's Hill, but I was anxious to attend Fardale, and mother helped me out in it. You know, I'd heard about Frank Merriwell, and I thought it would be fine to attend the prep school at which he fitted for college. Never dreamed I'd meet his brother there."

"Well, Earl," said Dick sincerely, "it's my good fortune that you selected Fardale. Don't seem to hear those fellows any more."

"I opine they've taken a sneak," said Brad.

"Still, they may be trying strategy. They may be waiting for us to open up, with the idea of charging the door the moment we unfasten it. There's no hurry about opening it."

Five minutes later Dick sniffed the air suspiciously, and then seemed to listen.

"Is the cook-stove smoking?" he asked.

Buckhart made an investigation, and replied that the stove was all right.

"I smell smoke," declared Dick. "What's that crackling sound? Can't you hear it?"

All listened, and they plainly heard a faint, crackling sound, which seemed to come from one corner of the camp, near the cook-house.

Dick seized a rifle, and started for the door.

"What are you going to do?" asked Gardner.

"I'm going to find out what that means. There's something wrong."

"Keep your eyes peeled for trouble, pard!" warned Brad, also catching up a rifle.

Merriwell investigated the door, and flung it open. One glance showed him that there was no one in front of the cabin. He leaped out, and ran around the corner. Immediately a cry of anger broke from his lips.

"Fire!" he shouted. "Boys, they've set the camp afire!"

A pile of brush and dead wood had been heaped against one corner of the cabin and set afire. It was now burning merrily, threatening to destroy the camp.

Standing his rifle against the outer wall of the cabin, Dick sprang at the brushwood, seizing some of the loose ends, beginning to jerk it away. Gardner and Buckhart followed his example.

Fortunately, the fire had not obtained a good hold on the logs of the camp. With the aid of snow and fir branches cut from trees near at hand, they quickly beat it out.

"Now, what do you think of that?" grated the Texan, as the last tiny blaze was extinguished and the danger past.

"It's a clear case of arson," said Dick, his black eyes flashing. "Where's Obediah? Why didn't he help us?"

When they looked for Tubbs, they found him still snoring in the bunk. He had slept through it all, without losing a wink.

"Well, wouldn't that beat you!" exclaimed Gardner.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEATH OF THE MOOSE.

During the remainder of the day nothing further was seen or heard of Sturtevant's crowd.

The return of Zeb Piper was expected by nightfall, but darkness came on, and the guide failed to appear.

"Evidently Piper found it more difficult getting to Greenville and back than he anticipated," said Dick.

"Well, I'm right sorry," grunted Buckhart. "We haven't a bit of coffee for breakfast, and breakfast in the woods without coffee is a mighty slim affair."

"Give me pie," said Tubbs, "and I'll cut out the coffee for the rest of my life."

"Pie for breakfast!" exclaimed Gardner. "Obediah, your stomach is totally depraved. You ought to be ashamed of it!"

"By Jim, I ain't!" grinned the fat boy, giving his rotund stomach a slap. "She's stood by me, and I've fed her on all kinds of pie that ever was made and called pie."

"I don't see that we've done a great deal of shooting thus far," said Earl. "Piper promised us a moose."

"We were too busy to look for game to-day," laughed Dick. "Wait until the guide gets back. There's plenty of time."

The evening passed pleasantly enough, for the boys were sociable, and chatted agreeably until all decided to turn in.

Before retiring, Dick stepped outside, and sniffed the air.

"It's softening up," he said. "Strikes me we're going to have a thaw. Hope we don't get rain."

"Oh, I don't see any signs of rain," said Gardner. "It's a little milder."

"If I'm at all weatherwise," declared Dick, "there's rain coming."

"We oughter have Bradley here," put in Tubbs. "He's the greatest weather prophet that ever was."

"Let's see that everything is fastened up good and solid to-night," suggested Dick, as they reentered the camp. "There's no telling what may happen. Seboois Joe may take a notion to give us a night call."

Nothing of the kind happened, however, and the night passed quietly. The morning came, dull and gray, with a faint, misty haze seeming to hang over the forest.

Gardner discovered a little coffee for breakfast, and the boys, having ravenous appetites, the morning meal was far from a failure. Buckhart turned out a dish of ham and eggs that made them all voracious, and, before they finished, they actually swept the table bare of every morsel of food.

The forenoon dragged slowly enough. Ere midday the boys began to feel that a visit from Sturtevant and his crowd would actually seem a pleasing diversion.

They ate again at twelve o'clock, and once more devoured an enormous amount of food.

"If Piper doesn't get back soon, there'll be a famine in this camp," laughed Dick.

"That's right," nodded Buckhart. "Between meals I get hungry enough to go out and gnaw the bark off the trees."

"Look here, Brad," said Obediah, with a beseeching expression, "can't you knock together some kind of

a pie? My tummy is jest cryin' for pie! Ham and eggs and beans and canned fodder is purty good, but a feller like me can't live on such truck. I'm pinin' away. I'm losin' flesh every minute. If this thing keeps up, I'll be a livin' skeleton."

"You look it!" cried Gardner, with a shout of laughter. "If you could reduce your flesh about sixty or seventy pounds, you'd be in a fairly normal condition."

"Say, if I ever had to reduce it on a diet that excluded pie, I'd certainly go to the bug-house. I'm thinking of it all the time. I'm dreaming of the kind mother used to make—squash pie, apple pie, mince pie, custard pie, punkin pie—— Oh, yum, yum! Punkin pie—that's the best ever! I'd jest like to see about four dozen good punkin pies stacked right up before me. I wouldn't do a thing to them! Then there's date pie and prune pie and raisin pie and Washington pie—I don't care what kind it is; as long as it's pie, give it to me."

"Oh, you make me tired!" growled Buckhart. "You're dotty on that subject! You've got wheels, Obed!"

About three o'clock that afternoon, Dick found it impossible to remain idle longer. He got down a pair of snow-shoes, and prepared to go out. Buckhart expressed a desire to go along, but Merriwell objected.

"Better stay here, Brad. You know, there's no telling when the Sturtevant crowd will show up again. Besides that, you're no expert on snow-shoes, and I'd have to go slow on your account. I'll be back about dark."

They watched him as he started away on the snow-shoes, with his rifle in his hand.

Avoiding the dense thickets, he made rapid progress through the woods. Not more than twenty minutes after leaving the camp, he was given a start by the distant sound of a rifle-shot.

"Wonder who fired?" he speculated. "I suppose it was some of the Sturtevant crowd."

Changing his course slightly, he continued in the direction from which the report had seemed to come. At intervals he paused, and listened, sweeping the forest with his keen eyes.

The snow that had been so crisp and light the day before was now moist and heavy beneath his feet. It was in the finest condition for easy traveling on snow-shoes, for, although slightly damp, it did not cling.

As he was listening for the fourth time, he fancied he heard a faint, far-away shout.

"Sounded like a call for help," he muttered. "I wonder if any one is in trouble over that way?"

On he went once more, and a few minutes later he again heard a cry. This time he was certain it was a cry of distress.

"Perhaps it's some one lost in the woods. It would be like those Kent's Hill fellows to wander off by themselves and get lost. Any one can do that easy enough here."

As he advanced, the frequent cries grew plainer

and plainer. Beyond question, some one was calling for assistance. Finally, through an opening between the trees, he caught sight of a moving figure. A moment later he discerned it was an animal, and it did not take him long to find out that this animal was one of the lords of the Great North Woods, a moose.

The boy's blood leaped and tingled in his veins. Immediately he sought cover behind the trunk of a tree, where he remained to take into consideration the direction of the wind. To his satisfaction, he discovered that whatever light air was moving was blowing toward him from the moose.

"Fine!" he whispered. "The beast can't get scent of me. Now to get near enough for a sure shot."

"Help, help!"

The cry was plain enough now, and it distinctly came from the vicinity in which Dick had seen the moose.

"Wonder where the fellow is?" speculated Merriwell.

He peered forth from his place of concealment, and observed the actions of the animal. The moose was slowly tramping around the foot of a tree, where the snow was trodden hard. At intervals, the animal paused and pawed with one forward foot. Finally it did a singular thing. Straight at the tree it charged, and the clash of its horns against the trunk rang through the woods.

"Aha-ha!" thought Dick. "I bet I have it! Mr. Moose has treed his man!"

Watching his opportunity, the boy slipped from the shelter of one tree to another by fits and starts, slowly drawing nearer to the angry moose. Before long he reached a position from which he felt confident he could make an effective shot. His nerves were tingling with the peculiar sensation that often attacks young sportsmen, and he realized he was threatened by "buck-fever."

"Steady, Merriwell!" he whispered to himself. "You've got to hold yourself now!"

Softly cocking the rifle, he lifted it to his shoulder. The weapon was rigid and unquivering in his grasp. In this moment he had assumed complete command of himself.

Slowly the moose shifted about until its left side was toward the boy. Dick aimed at the forward shoulder, and pulled the trigger.

With the clear crack of the rifle, the moose made one spring, and then plunged forward into the snow, where it floundered and kicked in its death throes.

A shout burst from the boy, and he started forward at full speed, carrying his rifle ready for use, in case he needed to fire again. If the bullet had struck where he aimed, he felt confident no second shot would be required.

He was right, for the forward shoulder of the animal had been smashed by the bullet.

Dick had a hunting-knife, and, watching his chance, he dashed forward, and stuck it into the throat of the

animal, instantly retreating, for even a dying moose is dangerous.

The blood of the great beast stained the damp snow. The boy stood looking down at his game, with a feeling of mingled regret and satisfaction. From the sportsman's point of view, it was a fine thing he had done, but, as he witnessed the last dying struggles of the lord of the Great North Woods, pity and regret threatened to overwhelm every other sensation.

"It's your fate, old boy!" he murmured. "It's the hand of man against you and against everything in creation, finned, feathered, and furred."

For the time being, he had forgotten the person whose cries of distress had led him to that spot, but now he heard a scraping sound, and, glancing upward, saw a human figure slipping down the tree trunk from the lower branches. This person reached the ground, and turned toward Dick. His face was partly covered by white bandages, but enough of it was exposed for Merriwell to recognize him instantly.

"Mortimer Sturtevant!" exclaimed Dick.

CHAPTER VIII.

DISPUTED GAME.

Sturtevant stood still, and stared at Dick in anything but a grateful manner.

"So it's you, is it?" he said, with a tone of mingled disappointment and resentment. "I'm sorry it wasn't some one else. Anyhow, you finished my moose for me."

"Finished him?" said Dick inquiringly.

"That's what I said."

"Yes, I heard you say it; but what did you mean?"

"Why, I found him here in this 'yard' he had made, and shot him, in the first place. You simply finished him up for me."

Dick began to smile broadly.

"Is that all?" he asked, with a sarcastic intonation. "I suppose the old fellow was pretty well done for when I fired at him?"

"Sure. It was only a matter of time before he would have croaked."

Merriwell's smile turned to a laugh.

"Well, for a dying moose, he was just about the liveliest creature I ever saw. Why, he was trying to butt down the tree you had taken refuge in. Where's your gun?"

"Oh, it's here in the snow somewhere. When I fired, the moose fell, and I ran forward. Just as I was right upon the creature, he rose, and I dropped my gun by accident. Didn't have time to get hold of it again, and, being defenseless, I took to the tree. The beast was fearfully furious in his dying agony."

"Dying agony is good. Let's take a look at him, and see where you hit him. What did you aim at?"

"His head, of course."

"And you're the son of Augustus Sturtevant, the timber king? I presume this is not the first time you've

been in the Maine woods. Still, you fired at the head of a moose!"

"Well, what of that?" snapped Mortimer.

"Oh, nothing," answered Dick, "only Seboois Joe should have told you better. We'll look at the moose, and see where you hit him."

The eyes of the forest monarch were glazed in death. Dick approached it fearlessly, and made a hasty examination.

"See here, Sturtevant," he said, "here's where your bullet struck. It clipped a piece out of the beast's antlers, near their base. The shock paralyzed the moose for a few moments. That's how the creature happened to fall, but it's a sure thing that the wound—if you can call it that—was not at all dangerous. Your dying moose would have lived out the rest of his natural life, for all of your attempt to cut it short."

"Perhaps that's where you hit him," muttered the timber king's son.

"Not on your life!" said Dick. "I fired at his left forward shoulder, and you can see that my bullet smashed it. I hardly think you've got any claim on this moose, Sturtevant."

"I don't care what you think!" cried Mortimer hotly. "I saw the creature first, and fired at him. I hit him, too. He's mine, and I'll take him!"

Once more Dick laughed.

"What are you going to do?" he asked. "Are you going to toss him over your shoulder, and carry him off? You're a good bluffer, Sturtevant, but your bluffs don't go with me. You ought to be grateful to get out of the scrape you were in. Only for me, it's possible you would have spent the night in that tree, with Mr. Moose standing guard beneath it. Don't give me any more hot air! Where are your snow-shoes?"

"There're here somewhere in the snow. I kicked them off when I started to climb the tree, and the moose trampled them. Here they are now."

Sturtevant fished a pair of broken snow-shoes out of the trampled snow. Following this, he found his rifle, and brought that to light.

"You may be able to fix up those snow-shoes so you can get back to your camp," said Dick. "In the meantime, I've got to do a little hustling myself, for I'm going back for assistance to take in my moose."

"I warn you not to touch this moose!" almost shouted Mortimer, the portion of his face that could be seen turning white with intense anger. "You fellows seem to think you can come up here and carry things on just as you please. You'll find out differently. One of you threw hot water on me, and scalded me. That's why I'm wearing these bandages. I'll make the chap who threw it suffer, and don't you forget it! I'm just biding my time, that's all."

Dick seemed amused by the fellow's excitement and rage.

"You're a most peppery and top-lofty individual," he said. "What you really need is a good, proper trimming."

Sturtevant seemed to regard this as a threat, for suddenly he lifted his rifle, and turned the muzzle toward Dick.

"Don't you try to put a hand on me!" he snarled. "If you do, I'll shoot!"

"Oh, say, you cantankerous galoot," cried another voice, "just lower that shooting-iron some, or I'll certain drill you!"

Dick was astonished, for only a few rods away stood Buckhart.

"Brad!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

"Couldn't keep still, pard," answered the Texan. "You didn't want me as companion, but there wasn't any reason why I shouldn't take to snow-shoes, and prowl on my own hook. Somehow, I had a feeling that you'd get into a scrape, and I followed your trail. Heard you shoot. Evidently you found game?"

Dick explained in a few moments how he had discovered Sturtevant treed by the moose.

"Well, what's the matter with him now?" demanded Brad. "He ought to be a whole lot thankful to you."

"He claims the moose."

"What?"

"That's right."

"Well, he certain has his nerve with him!"

The Texan had approached and joined them. Sturtevant was standing somewhat apart, with the butt of his rifle on the snow, seeming to be in doubt.

"Here's where he hit the moose, Brad," said Dick, pointing to the place where Sturtevant's bullet had clipped a piece from the base of the creature's antlers. "He thought he'd killed the animal when it fell, so he rushed forward, but the moose rose up, and put him into the tree in a hurry."

The Texan faced Mortimer squarely, giving him a look of amused contempt.

"You sure are the limit!" he drawled.

"I've heard enough of that talk from your friend!" growled Sturtevant. "Let up on it!"

He knelt, and began seeking to repair his injured snow-shoes.

In the meantime, giving the fellow no further consideration, Dick and Brad decided on a plan.

"I'll hustle back to camp," said Merriwell, "and bring Piper's tote-sled. With the sled, we can take the moose in. You stay here and keep guard."

"All right, partner," nodded the Texan. "Depend on me. I don't opine Mr. Sturtevant will carry your moose away while I'm watching it."

"I'll have to hustle," said Dick. "It's late, and it may be dark before I get back here. Don't worry, for I'll surely return."

"I'll not worry any, Dick. I haven't forgotten that you were educated in your tender youth by a redskin. You'll find your way back all right, all right."

"If you move that moose," said Sturtevant, "we'll come over to your old camp and take it, if we have to tear the cabin down!"

"Mebbe you'll set it afire again!" sneered Brad.

"That was a brave piece of work, and you ought to be proud of it!"

The timber king's son made no reply to this. Having fixed the snow-shoes as well as possible, he adjusted them to his feet, gave Merriwell and Buckhart a last look of hatred, picked up his rifle, and started off slowly. He found some difficulty in manipulating the injured snow-shoes, but they were better than none at all, as they enabled him to get along without wading through the white blanket that covered the ground.

The boys watched Sturtevant until he vanished amid the trees. Then Dick hurried away, leaving Brad to guard the dead moose.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT HAPPENED TO BUCKHART.

Gardner and Tubbs were greatly excited when Dick returned to camp and told them he had killed a moose.

"Hoopee!" squealed the fat boy. "Where is he, Dick? I don't see anything of him."

"Did you think I'd brought him in?" asked Merriwell. "I've come for the tote-sled. Buckhart is watching the moose. We'll bring him in on the sled."

"I'll go with you," said Gardner.

"Me, too!" shouted Obed.

"You'll make a fine mess of it, Obed, if you try to go with us," said Dick. "You stay here, and look out for the camp. Gardner may come, if he wants to."

A few moments later, with the dusk of night gathering in the forest, Dick and Earl started out with the tote-sled.

Although it rapidly grew dark, Merriwell followed the trail unerringly, and they finally approached the spot where the monarch of the North Woods had been slain. As they drew near, Dick shouted to Brad, and was puzzled because he received no answer.

Again and again he called, but the forest was silent, save for the echoes of his voice.

"That's queer," he said apprehensively. "I don't like it. It's not like Brad to keep still."

"It is queer," agreed Earl. "Are you sure we're near the place?"

"Certain. We'll reach it directly. 'I don't suppose anything could have happened to Buckhart?'"

A light mist had begun to fall. This threatened to turn into rain, and there was every prospect of a dreary, drizzling night.

In a few minutes they arrived at the place where the moose had been killed.

"This is the spot," asserted Dick; "but I don't see anything of Brad."

"Where's your moose?" questioned Gardner.

"He should be right here, within twenty feet of this tree."

But there was no moose. Dick found the exact spot where the animal had fallen, and then produced matches, lighting one of them.

"Here's the blood on the snow," he said. "Here's

the imprint of the creature's body. You can see it, Gardner."

"Sure enough," said Earl. "But are you positive you killed him?"

"Why, I cut his throat."

"That settles it. Just the same, he's gone, Dick."

The match burned until Merriwell was compelled to drop it. Then he and Earl stood still, staring at each other through the darkness, which hid the expression of their faces. After a moment, Gardner said:

"Dick, something has gone wrong. Some one has moved your moose."

"That's not the worst of it, Earl—Buckhart is gone! This is bad business! I'm worried, Gardner! I'm afraid the hand of Seboois Joe was in this piece of work!"

"So am I," admitted the boy from Calais. "Seboois Joe would do anything."

"If that breed injures Brad Buckhart, I'll have him properly punished, though it may cost me any amount of time and money!"

"But what can we do now?"

"Stand where you are, and I'll try to find out what's happened. The snow ought to show signs that will tell us something."

Earl remained in his tracks while Dick lighted other matches and began inspecting the marks on the snow. After a few minutes, Merriwell said:

"The moose was taken away on a tote-sled. Here are the tracks."

"That doesn't explain what happened to Brad."

"Wait; I'm not through investigating."

Three minutes later, Dick spoke again:

"Gardner, it looks mighty bad. I believe Buckhart was attacked and captured. I don't know how it was done, but here are marks which indicate a struggle."

"It's the work of Sturtevant's crowd!" cried Earl hotly.

"You'll be safe if you bet on that," agreed Dick.

"Then let's make for Twin Camps without delay. That infernal Indian might kill Brad!"

"If Sturtevant was with him, I doubt if Seboois Joe would be permitted to carry the thing that far. No, Earl, I don't think there is any danger of that sort. They're bound to drive us out of this region. That's their game."

* * * * *

With all the skill at his command, Seboois Joe crept closer and closer to the unsuspecting boy who stood guard over the moose. The half-blood dodged swiftly from tree to tree, sheltering himself from view behind their dark trunks. The gloom of the misty woods favored him. Besides that, he was an Indian by nature, and possessed all the craft of his race.

The heavy mist aided the shadows in making the woods dim and obscure.

Brad was restless. He had removed his snow-shoes after awhile, having walked back and forth over a

certain strip of snow until it was trodden to a hard path. Up and down this path he paced.

Seboois Joe made his calculations with a nicety that permitted him to arrive behind the concealment of a tree at one end of this path while Brad was at the other end. The boy turned, and came toward the concealed breed.

Reaching the end of the path, Buckhart wheeled to retrace his steps.

Out sprang Seboois Joe! His moccasined feet made no sound. With the agility of a catamount, he leaped at the boy's back, alighting fairly upon his shoulders and hurling him face downward.

Brad's rifle flew from his hands as he fell. Although attacked in such a manner, the Texan began to struggle instantly, seeking to turn and cast off his unseen antagonist.

"No, you don't!" snarled Joe, as he fastened his sinewy fingers on the boy's throat.

Brad's wind was shut off in a twinkling. He struggled on, seeking to tear those crushing fingers from his windpipe, and feeling himself growing weaker and weaker all the while. In a few moments a buzzing noise began to sound in his ears, swelling rapidly to a dull roar. Before his eyes, bright lights seemed to flash. He knew he was on the verge of succumbing. Finally the boy lay still, with his face crushed downward into the snow.

"Let up, Joe!" cried a voice. "You'll kill him, if you don't!"

"Not much difference!" grunted the half-breed. "Kill him now, he make no more trouble."

"But I won't have it!" shouted Mortimer Sturtevant, as he seized the ruffian's shoulder. "Let up, I tell you!"

Reluctantly the guide released his hold on the unconscious lad. Sturtevant seized Buckhart, and turned him over, stooping low to peer anxiously into his face.

"My goodness!" he fluttered. "I'm afraid you've done it! If you have, I won't stand by you. I told you to be careful."

"No make so much fuss," said Joe. "He not dead. He come round all right pretty soon. Where tote-sled?"

"I left it back yonder a piece. Never mind that now. I want to be sure this fellow does come round. Killing game is all right, but killing a human being is out of my line."

"Bah!" grunted Joe. "I say he no dead. He be all right bimeby. What you do with him? Leave him here?"

Sturtevant considered.

"I have an idea," he said. "If you're sure this fellow's going to come round all right, we'll tie him, and pack him back to camp. Can we do it?"

"Mebbe so."

"Then let's get about it. If you do anything, you can tie him up so he won't make trouble when he revives."

From a pocket of his hunting-coat, the half-blood produced some rawhide thongs.

"Fix him with these," he said. "Watch me do it."

With swiftness and skill, he bound Brad's arms to his sides.

"Git tote-sled," he said.

Sturtevant hurried away, soon to return with the tote-sled, which was an affair something like a toboggan, made to be drawn over the surface of the snow. Its under side was smooth and polished until it shone like glass. There were no runners.

"It's a good thing you started out with this sled to-day, Joe," said Sturtevant.

"I know where to find deer," said the guide. "Think I shoot one. Take sled to bring him in on."

"And you heard Merriwell when he fired at the moose?"

"Yes; Joe have pretty good ears. He hear much far."

The boy laughed in a satisfied manner.

"Mr. Merriwell will be somewhat surprised when he comes back here and finds his moose and his chum gone. Really, it will be a great joke. But I'm still worried over this chap. He doesn't seem to recover."

"Oh, he come round," assured the half-blood. "Look, see, him all right."

Brad had stirred slightly and gasped for breath. A faint groan came from his swollen throat.

Mortimer Sturtevant was relieved, and he showed it.

"We'd better hurry up," he said. "We want to be well away from here before Merriwell gets back."

"He no git back until long after dark," asserted the guide. "Come on, we roll moose onto sled."

It was well for them that Seboois Joe was a very strong man, as it took the united efforts of both to get the moose onto the tote-sled. By the time this was done, Buckhart had quite recovered, and managed to rise to a side position.

"Hello!" said Sturtevant, as he approached and stood over the Texan; "how are you feeling now? Not quite so gay and chipper, I fancy."

"So it's you, is it?" muttered Brad thickly, with a great effort. "You don't mean to tell me that you sneaked up on me? If you did, I want to lie down again and expire. I sure am a heap ashamed of myself!"

"I won't take the credit," chuckled Mortimer. "The guide took care of you."

"It's some relief to know that. What's your next move?"

"You're going back to our camp."

"Am I?"

"You bet your sweet life!"

"Sturtevant boy heap right," said the half-blood. "We take you with us."

"What if I decline to go?"

Joe gave a grunt. A moment later he flashed forth a wicked knife, and held it before Brad's eyes.

"How you like this?" he demanded. "You make much trouble, we fix you with this."

"Evidently it's up to me to be mild and passive," said the Texan. "Give off your orders."

"You git up. We put you on snow-shoes. We say march so. Then you march. We follow, and haul moose. You understand?"

"That's clear enough," said Brad, as he twisted about, and got upon his knees, finally rising to his feet. "You're having a lot of fun with me now, but it'll be my turn next."

A few minutes later they started out, Brad in advance, following the course chosen by them. The guide and Sturtevant were drawing the sled, on which was the moose. Their course was slow, but they plodded on steadily, while the misty shadows flickered and turned to darkness.

CHAPTER X.

AT TWIN CAMPS.

It was raining in earnest when the lights of Twin Camps finally appeared.

"Here we are!" cried Sturtevant, in relief. "I'm glad of it. By Jove! it's been a hard pull."

He lifted his voice in a shout, which was soon answered from the two cabins known as Twin Camps. Doors were flung open, and in the light that shone forth they saw the young campers peering out into the rainy night.

"Hello, you fellows!" cried Mortimer. "Wake up, there! Come out and see what we've brought with us."

"By gwathuth, it'th Mortimer!" cried Oscar Flutterby, as he thrust his head out. "Thay, Mortimer, deah boy, it'th awful nathty out doorth. I hope you don't mind if we don't come out and get all wet. What ith it you've bwrought?"

"I've shot a moose," announced Sturtevant.

"What's that?" cried several of the boys.

Heedless of the rain, they hurried forth, with the exception of Flutterby, who remained inside one of the doorways.

"We've also brought some two-legged game," laughed the timber king's son. "Just take a look at him."

He pushed Buckhart forward into the light that shone from a doorway.

There was a chorus of wondering exclamations.

"Who is it?"

"What are you doing with him?"

"Why, his hands are tied!"

"It's one of the Merriwell crowd!"

"You've guessed it, Crabtree," chuckled Sturtevant. "He's one of that gang, and we've captured him."

"What are you going to do with him?" questioned the boy called Crabtree.

"Oh, I have a little plan which I fancy will bring that bunch to terms," boasted Mortimer. "We'll keep him captive until they get very humble, and agree to anything I propose."

"You certain will grow gray-headed before that time!" growled the Texan. "It's right evident you don't know much about Dick Merriwell."

"Oh, I'll bring this Merriwell to terms," asserted Sturtevant.

Next the moose was dragged forward into the light, and the boys surrounded it, with exclamations of admiration.

"Did you really shoot it, Mortimer?" asked one.

"Oh, yes," said Brad sarcastically; "if you'll examine the base of the creature's antlers, you'll see where he shot it. He's a great sportsman! I'll tell you who killed that moose. It was my pard, Merriwell. Mr. Sturtevant was up a tree at the time, and the moose was standing guard at the foot of that tree."

"Don't you believe a word of it," said Sturtevant. "That mark on the horns is where Merriwell hit the moose. I killed it, and he had the nerve to claim it."

"Well, how did you get it away from him?" asked Crabtree.

"Oh, he went after a tote-sled to haul it away on, and I found Joe. We didn't wait for Merriwell to come back. That's all. This chap was guarding the moose. He did a fine job at it. Joe jumped on him, and here he is."

"You're a first-class liar, Sturtevant!" exclaimed Brad.

"What's that?" snarled the leader of the Twin Camps crowd, stepping swiftly forward before Brad, and lifting his clenched fist.

"Didn't I say it plain enough?" asked the Texan. "You're a liar! Now hit me; my hands are tied."

Mortimer's clenched fist dropped by his side.

"Oh, I won't hit you now," he said; "but there'll come a time when I'll make you swallow those words."

"You'll never live long enough! If you want to try it, just take me inside one of these cabins, lock the door, set me free, and then come at me. You'll have all your friends around to watch you do me up."

"I'll settle with you when I get ready, and in my own way," said young Sturtevant. "Take him inside, boys."

Buckhart was pushed into one of the cabins, where Oscar Flutterby stood grinning at him in a derisive manner.

"Why, it's the wuffian who talkth like a cowboy," lisped Flutterby. "He don't theem tho thavage ath he wath the latht time I thaw him. He, he, he!"

"He, he, he!" mocked Brad. "Did you ever look in the glass?"

"Why, of courthe I have."

"And you survived the shock?"

"Why, you wude, narthty cwecher! He'th perfectly intholent, boyth. I never thaw thuch a common fellow."

"You'll excuse me if I sit down," said the Texan, as he settled himself on a chair.

"No, thir!" cried Oscar. "That'th my chair, thir! Git wight up!"

"Is this your chair, baby? Well, come and take it."

"I will!" declared the lisper, flourishing his fist. "I'll puth you wight out of it!"

But when he advanced to do so, greatly to his astonishment, one of Brad's heavy boots flew out and caught him near the pit of the stomach, sending him backward, to land with a thud in a sitting position on the floor.

"That seat will do for you, Mamie!" chuckled the Texan.

"Oh, good gwathuth thakes alive!" moaned Flutterby, holding both hands to his stomach. "He'th half killed me, boyth! He kicked me! Why don't thomebody go wight up and thtwrike him?"

Mortimer Sturtevant had remained outside to aid the guide in taking care of the moose. He entered at this juncture, and paused in surprise, staring at Flutterby.

"What's the matter, Oscar?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm tho glad you've come, Mortimer, deah boy! That wude wuffian that wight down on my chair, and, when I twied to take it, he kicked me!"

"Well, he'll get some of the kicks taken out of him if he tries that business here!" snarled Mortimer angrily. "You're altogether too gay, my friend."

"Gayety is natural with me. I can't help it. I just bubble over with effervescence. I'm the jolliest fellow you ever struck. I'm always joking. Mamie collided with one of my jokes a moment ago."

Sturtevant assisted Flutterby to rise, after which he called Crabtree to help him, and together they jerked Brad out of the chair.

"You'll sit where we tell you to," said the timber king's son.

"Oh, all right," came with apparent submissiveness from Buckhart. "As long as you are so fussy, I won't be particular."

"I with you'd give him a thlap for me," urged Oscar.

"Why don't you do it, baby?" asked the Texan.

"No, thir, I won't touch thuch a w'etch!"

Brad made no further trouble, thinking it best, under the circumstances, to be submissive.

"Supper is waiting in the other camp," said one of the boys.

"I'm ready for it," declared Sturtevant. "I have a fancy appetite to-night. To-morrow we'll dine on moose meat. The head of that old moose will look fine in my room at home."

"And you'll be proud every time you see it!" said Brad. "You'll think what a beautiful shot you made when you knocked a piece out of its horn."

One of the boys was left to guard the captive, while

the others went across into the opposite cabin and ate supper. They came back after awhile, seeming well satisfied and in a jovial mood.

"We won't starve you, my friend," said Sturtevant. "You can have a pick at the leavings. Come on, Harkness; we'll take him across."

"Your hospitality seems quite appropriate for the sort of chaps you are," grinned Brad. "I hope the leavings are abundant, for I assure you my appetite hasn't been disturbed, although my throat is decidedly lame from the effects of that Injun's fingers."

They marched him across through the rain, which had now set into a steady downpour.

"It's rather awkward that you can't feed yourself," said Sturtevant. "We might give you a chance, if you'd promise to be decent."

"What do you mean?" questioned Brad.

"We'd untie you while you ate, but you'd have to give your word to let us tie you again when you are through."

Brad sniffed the coffee, and his eyes surveyed the food on the table.

"Gents, I'm a whole lot famished," he said. "Just let me loose long enough to feed my face, and I'll give you my word of honor that you may truss me up again when I'm through."

"All right," said Sturtevant; "but I want you to notice that Seboois Joe is sitting right there by the door, with his rifle leaning at his side. If you try any tricks, Joe has my permission to do anything he likes."

"You didn't have to say that," said the Texan, a bit resentfully. "When I give a man my word, I stand by it. You won't have to watch me, and there's no need to threaten."

Sturtevant and Crabtree untied the thongs and freed Brad's hands.

"Thanks!" smiled the Texan, in his most affable manner. "Now watch me hit the grub pile."

CHAPTER XI.

THE BOY WHO WAS MARKED.

In truth Buckhart's appetite had been undisturbed by his misfortune. The food he stowed away would have satisfied a lumberman.

"Good gwathuth!" lisped Oscar Flutterby, as he watched the Texan; "if thomebody don't thtop him, we'll have to thend out for thupplith in the morning!"

Behind his hand Mortimer Sturtevant whispered hoarsely to Oscar:

"Let him eat. It may be his last meal! Perhaps Seboois Joe will cut his throat before morning!"

"Say," drawled Brad, "if you think you're going to spoil my appetite and cut me short that way, you're a heap mistaken. Can't scare me out of finishing up in style on this line."

"Your nerve seems to be all right, my friend," put in Dave Crabtree. "Say, I rather like you."

"Thanks," nodded the Texan, his mouth full as he spoke. "You don't seem so bad yourself. How'd you happen to tumble into this slushy bunch?"

"Thluthy bunch!" cried Flutterby, in exasperation. "Do you hear that, Mortimer, deah boy? He calth uth thluthy! Evwy time he openth hith mouth he in-creatheth my exathperwation!"

"Look here, Sturtevant," spoke the boy from Texas, fixing a piercing eye on the lisper, "why don't you put a muzzle on it? You ought to have a collar and chain for the little poodle."

"Now look here, fellowth," piped Oscar, springing to his feet and flourishing both hands in the air, "I want to know if you're going to let thith wuffian come here and eat all our food and talk to uth jutht ath he chootheth. He'th inthulted me! He'th kicked me! He'th done evwything narhty he could think of to me, and nobody theemth to rethent it! I want you to underthtand I'm weal mad. I'm going wight out into the other camp, and I'll thtay there, too. If I meet thith wuffian on the thtreet thometime in a big thity, I'll never thpeak to him. I'll walk wight by him and give him the glathy eye. That'th the way I'll get even with him."

"Oh, please—please don't do that!" entreated Brad. "It would break my heart, baby! I'd never recover from the blow!"

"That'th jutht exactly what I'm going to do if I ever get the chance," threatened Oscar, as he minced toward the door, turned to give the Texan a comical look of indignation, and then flounced out into the rain.

Brad lay back on his chair and roared with laughter.

"He sure is funnier than a whole cage of monkeys!" he cried. "But what is he doing up here in the woods? I don't see how he ever dared venture so far away from home and mother."

"Really, sir," said Sturtevant, "Flutterby is a nice fellow. His parents are wealthy."

"Waugh!" grunted Brad. "I suppose that makes him nice in some people's estimation; but I want to say right here that I never could stand for a sissy. They're not in my line."

"I think you are carrying things a little too far, under the circumstances," said Sturtevant. "Are you through stuffing yourself?"

"This cup of coffee will just about finish me."

"It ought to. It ought to kill you. I presume you're ready now to have your hands tied again?"

Brad wiped his mouth on his coat sleeve.

"Fine napkins you fellows provide!" he grinned.

"Oh, sure; go ahead and tie me up. All I ask is that you leave my feet free. If that half-breed gent comes sneaking round me in the night, I'll just about kick the jaw off him."

At this the beady eyes of Seboois Joe took on a wicked glitter, and he muttered something to himself.

Buckhart was rebound, after which they again marched him across into the other cabin, where Flutterby was found sulking alone in a corner.

The Texan was given a bunk and told that he could turn in whenever he pleased. He seemed in no hurry to retire, but sat listening to the chatter of the boys, who were inclined to joke and laugh over the fine trick played on Merriwell's party. Two of the boys brought out a banjo and a guitar and tuned up. When they struck into a lively tune, another chap sprang out upon the floor and began to dance.

Oscar Flutterby revived somewhat and observed things with fresh interest.

"Thay, Winnie," he called to the dancer, "that'th not nithe. Why don't you learn thomething graceful and delicate? Thothe thtpeph are jutht like a nigger danthe, doncher know."

"Perhaps you will give us something graceful and delicate, Oscar," suggested Win Baker.

"I would if I had my cothtumeth here. I'd do a thkirt danthe. You know I took part in our minthtrel thow at thchool and wath a female imperthonator."

"Whoop!" cried Buckhart. "I knew it! You couldn't fool me on that slushy-tongued chicken! A female impersonator! Oh, waugh! Why don't somebody kill him?"

"Now there he goth again!" came resentfully from Oscar. "It'th thimply exathperating beyond meathure."

"Let the boy alone, won't you?" snapped Sturtevant. "If you'll keep still, he'll provide amusement for us."

"I have one more request to make," said Brad.

"What is it?"

"When he starts in providing amusement, will you please blindfold me and plug my ears with cotton? He's the limit! I can't stand for him!"

"You're a most particular sort of person, aren't

you?" sneered Sturtevant. "You may have to stand for more than that. Look here, I'm going to take these bandages off and put on some fresh ones. I want you to see what somebody in your crowd did to me."

He quickly removed the bandages, showing that his neck and chin had been scalded and was rather an unpleasant spectacle.

"What do you think of that?" he demanded. "If I'm marked for life, I'll never let up until the fellow who did it is punished a hundred times worse!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE CRY IN THE NIGHT.

"Did it ever occur to you," asked Brad, "that you were wholly to blame for this? You were trying to break into our camp. You smashed the window. Then you stood there with a pistol in your hand, threatening to shoot. Why, stranger, if you'd been out in the Pecos country, somebody would have plugged you for fair. Instead of being scalded, you'd be planted about now. You want to figure it that you got off a whole lot easy. By the looks of your face, I should say that, with proper care, the cuticle would grow again, and there would be no marks. Although you were scalded, the water wasn't hot enough to kill the skin and make grafting necessary. What you want to do is to cover that with a good bandage and exclude the air as far as possible for a few days. If you could use antiphlogistine, it would be all right in a week."

"Are you a doctor?" scornfully demanded Sturtevant.

"Out in the Pecos country about every cowman is something of a doctor. They have to be."

Sturtevant turned away, shrugging his shoulders. He produced a surgeon's bandage roll, and called Flutterby to assist him. With Oscar's aid, the bandages were once more applied.

The sound of rain could be heard beating steadily on the roof and the snow outside. It seemed that the "January thaw" had set in, beyond doubt.

Buckhart seemed to watch and listen with serene contentment while the boys of Twin Camps played and sang. Finally the guitar and banjo were put aside, and five of the boys gathered about the table, starting a game of draw poker, penny ante and five cents limit.

Flutterby was asked to join them, but he shook his head.

"You fellowth play too thteeep for me," he said. "I'll jutht take another pack and have a game of tholitaire all by mythelf."

"Here's where I turn in," muttered the Texan. And he proceeded to roll into the bunk assigned him.

Seboois Joe came over from the other side of the cabin and sat smoking silently while he watched the card-players.

Buckhart peered out at the half-breed.

"Sturtevant tried to frighten me about that throat-cutting business," he thought; "but I'll guarantee that the breed would cut a throat in a minute, if he took a fancy to do so. I'll sleep mighty light to-night. Wonder what Dick's doing? Wonder what he thought when he came back and found the moose gone and me along with it? I opine this crowd will hear from him before long."

Gradually the camp quieted down. The card-players were smoking cigarettes and earnestly attentive to their game. Seboois Joe seemed to doze.

Finally the guide started up and assumed a listening attitude.

Buckhart listened likewise, for he had heard a strange sound that seemed to come from the distant depths of the rain-washed forest.

After a few minutes, this sound was repeated, and, it being far more distinct, the card-players heard it likewise. They turned toward the half-blood inquiringly.

"What was that, Joe?" asked Dave Crabtree.

"Sounded to me like an Indian devil," said Mortimer Sturtevant. "There are plenty of bobcats in the woods."

Joe rose to his feet and opened the door slightly.

"No loupcivere," he declared. "Keep still."

Within thirty seconds the cry was once more heard, and this time it was very distinct.

"Much queer!" muttered the guide, as he stepped swiftly and softly to a corner, picking up a rifle.

"What are you going to do?" asked Win Baker.

"Go out and see what it is," was the answer.

"You want to be careful," warned Sturtevant. "If it's an Indian devil, probably the creature's hungry and savage, for there's been a long cold spell."

"No bother for Joe," said the guide. "Him know his business."

With the rifle in his hand, he slipped out quickly, closing the door behind him.

Barely had the man vanished when the boys heard the cry again.

"Good gwathuth!" gasped Oscar Flutterby. "I wouldn't go out there for a million dollarth!"

"I wouldn't fancy it myself," confessed Sturtevant. "But Joe is right when he says he knows his business."

Dave Crabtree began to pace the floor.

"This is not the first time I've been in these woods," he said. "I've heard bobcats and other creatures at night, but that cry was different from anything with which I'm familiar. It sounded half human and half animal."

"That's the way an Indian devil howls," said Sturtevant.

An air of anxiety and expectation overhung the boys. They listened, but now the minutes passed, bringing no sound to their ears, save the steady beating of the rain.

"Say, I can't keep still!" muttered Crabtree, as he suddenly caught down an old raincoat from a hook and began to put it on.

"What are you going to do?" questioned Sturtevant, in surprise.

Crabtree turned the collar of his coat up about the lower part of his face, seized a hat with a wide, slouching brim and clapped it on his head, pulling it down over his eyes.

"I'm going out," he said.

"Don't you do it! don't you do it!" cried several of the boys. "You're crazy if you do!"

"Well, you fellows say I'm always doing crazy things. Here I go!"

He caught up another rifle, and hurried out before they could stop him.

"That lunatic makes me sick!" exclaimed Sturtevant. "He's always trying some fool thing like that! If he doesn't run againt that howling beast, Seboois Joe may shoot him by mistake!"

Strange creeping sensations were stealing along Buckhart's nerves. He knew not exactly why he felt that way, but a mysterious voice seemed to whisper in his ear that something unusual was about to happen. He sat up on the edge of the bunk and waited.

Minutes passed, with the rain hissing amid the trees and over the soaking snow of the Great North Woods. It drummed on the roof with a hollow, monotonous sound.

Sturtevant became very nervous. Finally he opened the door and peered out into the gloomy blackness of the night. He gave a great start as he saw a figure advancing. Then he flung the door wide, crying:

"Come in, Crabtree! By Jove, you startled me!"

The boy in the mackintosh and slouch hat, from which rain was dripping, stalked into the cabin.

"Did you see anything of Joe?" questioned Win Baker.

"No," was the answer.

Buckhart stood up suddenly. The boy who had entered deliberately advanced toward Brad. On reaching the Texan, he quickly produced a knife, and, with two slashes, freed the captive's hands.

"Here! here!" shouted Sturtevant. "What are you doing, Dave? What do you mean?"

"I mean business!" was the answer, as the knife was thrust from view and a pistol took its place in the boy's hand.

With his left hand he flung off the rain-soaked hat. It was not Dave Crabtree who stood before the boys of Twin Camps.

It was Dick Merriwell!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RETURN.

Never in their lives had those boys been more astonished. They stared at Dick as if doubting the evidence of their eyes.

Merriwell wasted no time.

"I should hate to hurt any of you," he said; "but I mean business. If you keep still, I won't shoot."

He started for the door, Buckhart promptly accompanying him. Brad went out first, Dick turning, with the pistol still held ready, and backing out after him.

Slam!—the door was closed.

For several seconds after the departure of Merriwell and the rescued captive those boys stood as if turned to stone.

Oscar Flutterby was the first to speak.

"Gwathuth thaketh!" he lisped.

Mortimer Sturtevant sprang into action, as if spurred.

"Where's Crabtree?" he shouted. "What did Merriwell do to him?"

"Fooled! Tricked! Sold!" snarled Win Baker. "We're a lot of chumps!"

Then there was a great uproar. They seized weapons and dashed to the door, which was flung open. The light that shone from within the cabin simply seemed to make the darkness beyond its reach more black and intense. Outside they could discover no living thing.

Mortimer Sturtevant stepped out, lifted the muzzle of his rifle toward the tree tops and began working the lever. In this manner he fired six shots rapidly.

"That ought to bring Seboois Joe in a hurry," he said.

"Look out!" cried one of his companions. "Who's this? Somebody's coming!"

A dripping figure stalked into the light, and was recognized a moment later.

"Crabtree!" they cried.

It was Crabtree, minus the raincoat and slouch hat.

"What happened to you? Where have you been?" questioned every fellow, all seeming to speak at the same time.

"Heaven knows what happened to me!" mumbled Crabtree. "It was darker than a pocket. I was feeling my way along when something struck me on the jaw, and I give you my word I was down and out in a twinkling. I wish you'd tell me what it was. Where's my coat? Where's my hat?"

"I'll tell you what it was!" snarled Sturtevant. "It was Dick Merriwell's fist! He was watching for one of us out there. He must have soaked you handsomely, if you don't know what happened. Why, he took your coat and hat and walked right in here, cut the other fellow loose, pulled a pistol on us and walked out."

"The blazes you say?" muttered Crabtree, as if unable to believe it possible. "Where are they now?"

"Where are they? Why, they're gone. Who can follow them in this darkness and storm? Where's that fool guide? Where's Seboois Joe? He was tricked, too! I'll bet my life the cries we heard came from Merriwell's lips."

A few moments later Seboois Joe appeared. He asked to know the meaning of the shooting, and when they told him what had happened he swore with astounding fluency.

"What are you going to do?" cried Sturtevant. "It's a rotten shame to be tricked like this! I can't stand it to have those fellows get the best of me right along!"

"How boy find him way through woods to-night Joe not know," confessed the half-blood. "He big fool to try it. Mebbe now he git lost with other one, too. Serve um right. They not git far yet. Mebbe Joe find um. He look—see some."

"That's right," urged Sturtevant. "You know there are catamounts in these woods. If you shot at a catamount and hit a boy by accident no one could blame you."

"All right," said the breed. "Joe go look for catamount."

Once more he glided away and disappeared in the deep darkness.

* * * * *

Needless to say, Gardner and Tubbs waited anxiously and apprehensively for Dick to return. He had set out alone on his seemingly hopeless mission, refusing to permit either of them to accompany him.

Midnight passed, and the hours were creeping on toward daybreak.

At intervals the boys opened the cabin door and listened. The doleful, monotonous sound of falling rain met their ears, heavy as lead.

But finally, as they once more stood hopelessly listening in the doorway, a distant shout caused them both to jump excitedly.

Instantly they lifted their voices in answer.

"Dick!" cried Gardner. "Dick, this way! Here we are! Here's the camp!"

"Yi! yi! yi! Whoop! whoopee!"

It was the familiar cowboy yell of Brad Buckhart.

"Well, dern my picter!" squealed Obediah Tubbs. "What do you think of that? It's Brad!"

"Brad?" echoed Gardner. "That's right! But where 'is Dick?"

"He's right here, you bet your boots!" shouted the Texan. "Richard Merriwell is very much on deck to-night!"

Soon the two boys appeared and were greeted uproariously by their overjoyed friends.

"Well, say, this is great!" laughed Gardner. "Tell us about it!"

"Boo, hoo!" sobbed Tubbs, tears streaming down his face. "I never was so tickled in all my life!"

The fat boy embraced Dick and Brad, and then did an elephantine dance around the table.

"I admit I'm some tired," said the Texan. "That certain was the worst old tramp I ever took."

"But tell us about it—tell us about it!" urged Gardner. "Great Scott, we're dying to know what happened!"

"I'm glad you've got a good fire," said the Texan. "I'm plumb soaked through to the bone. Brr-r-r-r! It certain is raining some! If this keeps up, old Moosehead will overflow, and the whole woods will turn to a lake. Excuse me while I amputate my clothing. Got another dry outfit round this dugout?"

"Yes, we both need dry clothes," said Dick. "If it had taken another hour to get here, my matches would have been used up. Talk about your babes in the woods! You should have seen us stopping every little while and hovering over the match-safe while I lighted one, and we examined the compass."

"No compass could have brought me here without Dick," confessed the boy from Texas. "That's where his Injun training came into play. I'll bet a bunch of long-horns that old Seboois Joe can't set a straight course through these woods to-night."

"But I didn't get my training from Seboois Joe,"

reminded Dick. "It was another Joe—old Joe Crowfoot."

"Crowfoot has a right to be a whole lot proud of his pupil," asserted Brad, who was stripping off his wet clothes. "What's that I smell, Gardner?"

"Coffee," said Earl. "The last of the little supply I found. We kept it on the stove, thinking you'd need it if you ever did turn up."

"Gardner, you're sprouting wings! Gardner, you're an angel! Hot coffee! I won't do a thing to it!"

"Let me pour it!" fluttered Obediah, anxious to do something.

"Pour away and pour mighty lively!"

A drink of steaming coffee, a rubdown and some dry clothes made both Brad and Dick feel decidedly better. Then they told their stories, Buckhart beginning by relating the adventures that had befallen him. Merriwell finished the narrative as he described how he had found Twin Camps and lured Seboois Joe out into the darkness by decoy cries.

"I was on the point of walking in, pistol in hand, and facing that bunch," said Dick, "when another chap trotted out. I saw him coming when he opened the door. It was a great piece of luck that he walked straight toward me. I stepped behind a tree and waited. My eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, yet I could barely see him as he paused within two feet of me. I calculated about where his head would be and gave him the full force of my arm and shoulder. When I struck him he went down like a log, and I realized he was knocked out. Then another idea came to me. I pulled off his raincoat and put it on. I took his hat and settled it well down over my eyes. Then I walked in, and those chaps thought it was the other fellow. I knew the one I'd hit would come round pretty soon, so I didn't waste any time."

"I sure would so remark," chuckled the Texan. "He just waltzed up to me, cut me loose, pulled a small gun, and held those fellows frozen while we toddled out. That's about the whole of it. Here we are."

"There's only one thing I'm sorry about," said Dick.

"What's that?" questioned Earl.

"Sturtevant got my moose. I want that head."

"Pard, we'll take it!" cried the Texan. "As soon as this rain lets up, the troops of Fort Piper will march on Twin Camps."

"We'll talk that matter over," said Dick. "You know strategy is superior to force sometimes."

"Well, if I didn't know it before, I ought to after this night's work," admitted Brad.

CHAPTER XIV.

RECAPTURING THE HEAD OF THE MOOSE.

All through the next day it continued to rain steadily. Beneath this downpour the snow settled into a water-soaked mass.

"We're in for it, boys," said Dick. "We'll have to go light on the provisions that are short. There's no telling when Zeb Piper will get here now."

"It galls me some," muttered Buckhart, "that we're plumb out of coffee! Are you sure you used the last of it for that potful you brewed us last night, Gardner?"

"Sure," answered Earl. "It's all gone now."

"By Jim!" chuckled Tubbs, "we might go over and borrow some from our friends at Twin Camps!"

"You'll have to swim if you do," said Earl. "There'll be no getting around in the woods until it turns cold."

"How long does a January thaw last in Maine?" questioned Dick.

"Sometimes a week, sometimes two weeks," answered Earl.

"That certain is a bright prospect!" came dolefully from Buckhart. "Don't she ever let up under a week?"

"Oh, yes, sometimes. There's no telling what it will do."

"Can't you give us any hope, Dick?" asked Brad.

Merriwell went to the door, which he opened, standing there and looking out for some time.

"Yes," he laughed, "at last I'm going to chance a prophecy. It's about done raining. It will turn cold before to-morrow morning."

"Look here, pard, are you just guessing, or have you something to base that assertion on?"

"I'm basing it on my own judgment," said Dick.

His judgment proved good, for, as night came on, the rain gradually let up. The wind swung round to the south, and then came into the west, growing colder as it shifted.

"If she snaps up sudden," said Brad, "we'll be able to go skating right outside the door to-morrow."

In the night they heard the wind roaring through the trees, and the temperature inside the camp told them it was intensely cold. When morning broke they found the snow outside frozen hard enough to bear the weight of a man anywhere.

"I wonder how the old lake looks?" speculated Earl.

"We'll go and see after breakfast," said Dick.

Breakfast disposed of and the dishes washed, they started out, heading for the lake, which was nearly a

quarter of a mile away. On reaching the shore, they uttered a chorus of exclamations, for old Moosehead stretched out before them a broad shining mass of white ice.

"Piper will have to come up on his skates, if he comes now," laughed Dick.

"Skates?" cried Gardner. "By Jove, why didn't I think of them before? Fellows, there are two pairs of skates at camp."

"Well, you're a dandy!" exclaimed Dick. "Back I go for those skates. Boys, we can skate almost anywhere through these woods. The crust of this snow is hard enough and smooth enough for that."

"Gardner says there are only two pair," reminded Tubbs.

"Those are enough for Dick and me," laughed Brad. "What do you say, Earl?"

"Oh, I'm willing that you should try them first," answered Gardner good-naturedly. "You can't skate forever; I'll get my turn."

On returning to camp and trying the skates, the boys found to their satisfaction that the crust really was in such condition that they could skate almost anywhere through the woods.

"I have a little scheme, Brad," said Dick. "We'll take our rifles and the tote-sled. We're going over in the direction of Twin Camps. There's a moose over there."

"Good enough!" laughed the Texan. "If we ever get our hands on the moose, Mr. Sturtevant can say good-by to it."

Somewhat over an hour later they cautiously approached Twin Camps. As they drew near, they saw one of the campers passing from one cabin to the other, but none of Sturtevant's party remained outside.

"Keep your eyes open for that half-breed!" muttered Dick, guardedly. "He's the one we should fear most, for he might shoot at us. The others wouldn't."

Nearer and nearer they drew, coming up behind one of the cabins. They were only a few rods from it when Dick's keen eyes discovered something suspended from the strong limb of a tree. Instantly he reached out and clutched Brad's shoulder.

"Look there!" he said, with a gesture, his face beaming with delight. "By Jove, they've decapitated the moose and hung its head there to freeze! Sturtevant intends to have that head mounted. That's all we want now. Let them have the carcass."

"Just as you say, pard. If we can get that head down and onto our tote-sled, we'll hike so fast that lightning would have to move lively to catch us."

They were most successful in carrying out this plan, and in a short time the head of the moose was on the tote-sled, where Dick bound it securely. They started off slowly, but the loaded sled made a slight scraping noise on the icy crust. It is probable that this noise was heard inside the nearest cabin, for they were barely under way when the back door opened and a boy looked out.

Instantly this fellow raised an outcry, shouting to his companions:

"Come here, boys!" he cried. "Look at this! By George, they're stealing the moose's head!"

"Stealing it!" Merriwell flung over his shoulder derisively. "Oh, yes, we're stealing our own property!"

The outcry brought several other boys of Twin Camps hurrying forth, and there was a great babel of voices.

Dick and Brad laughed as they skated away through the woods, with the tote-sled gliding along behind them. Buckhart turned to wave a mittened hand derisively at the enemy, and then suddenly wheeled, crouching low and putting more force into his strokes, as he palpitated:

"Scoot, Dick—scoot! Seboois Joe is there! He's got a gun!"

Even as the word "gun" fell from the Texan's lips, a bullet passed them, and the ringing report of a rifle filled the forest with echoes.

Had they looked back, they would have seen Mortimer Sturtevant clutch the half-breed's rifle and push it aside as the shot was fired.

Seboois Joe swore.

"You let um steal from us?" he snarled.

"We can frighten as much as we please, but we're not going to shoot anybody like this," said Sturtevant. "I claimed the moose, but Merriwell did hit it when he fired, therefore I suppose he has some claim to it also."

"Sturtevant boss have boy with chicken heart," sneered the half-blood, as he turned disgustedly and entered the nearest cabin.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MONSTER OF THE STORM.

"By Jim!" piped Obediah Tubbs excitedly, "I want you to understand I ain't going to sit around this old cabin all day and do nothing! There's Dick and Brad off skatin', and me housed up like a poodle dog with a lame paw! I'm going out, Earl Gardner—I tell you I'm going out! I'm going to do something!"

"Well, why don't you go ahead and do it?" said Earl, looking up from the broken snow-shoe over which he was puttering. "What are you going to do, anyhow?"

"Tell me! tell me!" yelled Obediah, flourishing his fist in the air. "Tell me something to do, and tell me quick! I'm ready to bust!"

"The change in the weather has altered your temperament. This is the first time you've displayed an overabundance of energy since we came into the woods."

"I don't think it was right for Dick and Brad to gobble up them skates and go skinning away. We have to stay here. I wish I had an idee in my head. I want to have some fun. This ain't fun!"

The fat boy scratched his head thoughtfully. Suddenly he gave a squeal of delight.

"I have it!" he declared.

"Don't let it get away," implored Gardner. "Better try larkspur for them."

"You go to grass!" flung back Obed warmly. "I'm going to catch fish. Ha! ha! also he! he! What do you think of that? There's Piper's old ice-chisel, and I know where his fishing-tackle is. I'm going right out to the lake, chop about seventeen holes through the ice, and catch a barrel or two of lakere."

"By the time you get one hole chopped through the ice, you'll be ready to knock off," said Earl. "Perhaps you don't realize that the ice out there is more than an inch thick."

"Don't be so almighty encouraging and cheerful," said Tubbs resentfully. "What am I going to use for bait? I must have bait."

"You know where to find the pork. Try that."

Fifteen minutes later, bundled up to keep warm and loaded down with the ice-chisel and fishing-tackle, the fat boy set out for the lake. Gardner sarcastically wished him good luck, and suggested that he should call for help to bring back his fish.

It happened that luck was with Obediah that day. It was a laborious task cutting through the thick ice, but he finally opened up a hole and set his line, the hook baited with pork.

In order to keep warm, as much as for any other reason, he began cutting another hole. Suddenly he dropped the chisel with a yell and made a rush for the first hole, as the little flag had bobbed up, and was waving in the air.

"Hooked him, by Jim!" he squealed, as he seized the line and felt the fish tugging at it. "Come on here, old

boy! I want you! I'll show that mocking fellow, Gardner, that I'm a fisherman!"

Hand over hand he pulled at the dripping line, the fish coming heavily and making something of a fight for life. At last Tubbs gave a final pull and landed a handsome "laker" flapping on the ice.

The fat boy nearly had a fit.

"Well, I guess you'll jest about close Mr. Gardner's face for awhile," he squeaked triumphantly, attempting to perform a victorious dance, but suddenly slipping and sitting down with a fearful thump.

After admiring his capture awhile, Obed returned to the task of cutting the second hole. Within five minutes the little flag bobbed up again.

This time, on seizing the line, Obed's excitement grew almost uncontrollable. He tugged and pulled, while the fish struggled and fought to get away.

"Got the father of 'em all!" panted the fat boy. "Bet I can't get him out through this hole. Jiminy crickets! won't their eyes stick out when they see this one!"

Suddenly something snapped, and over he went flat on his back. Sitting up, he wildly pulled away at the line, but there was no further resistance. Having pulled the line in, he found that the hook had broken clear and the big fish was gone.

For at least half-a-minute he sat there looking at the broken line in a doleful manner.

"Ain't that always the way!" he muttered. "The biggest ones are sure to do that trick. When I tell the fellers about that one, they'll say I'm prevaricating."

His regret over the loss of the fish could not be expressed in words. After awhile, he baited another hook and set another line.

Obediah was so busy that he failed to notice a huge something which came skimming over the ice with the speed of an express-train. Finally a humming sound caused him to look up, and he instantly uttered a yell of surprise.

Close at hand, heading straight toward him, was an ice-boat with a large expanse of sail. On the boat was only one man.

"Look out! look out!" piped Obediah, frantically waving a signal. "Don't run a feller down! Don't you know nothing!"

The boat swerved, cut a wide half circle, and came up, heading into the wind with a scraping sound, which told that some sharp instrument was cutting into the ice as a brake. Down slid the sail.

Tubbs rubbed his eyes, and stared at the man on the boat.

"Well, dern my picter!" he gasped. "It's Piper! He's arrived at last!"

Zeb Piper it proved to be. Having stopped the boat a short distance away, the guide called Obediah to assist him in running it into a little cove.

"Couldn't swing in thar under full headway," explained Piper. "If I had, she'd climb a tree. How's everything?"

"All right, I guess," answered the fat boy, "only we're plumb out of coffee."

"I've brought plenty of coffee and other stuff," was the assurance. "Say, I just come up from Greenville a-flying on this arrangement. Didn't have no use for snow-shoes after the freeze. It was a case of skates or ice-bo't, and a friend let me have this bo't. Thought you boys might enjoy her. Catching any fish?"

"Be I?" grinned Obediah. "Well, you bet I am! Got five good fellers already."

"Where are the other boys, at camp?"

Tubbs explained, briefly telling of the trouble with the Twin Camps crowd.

Piper took a chew of tobacco and rolled it over his tongue.

"So old Sturtevant's snip of a brat has been bothering you, hey? Stole Merriwell's moose, did he? Well, I guess we'll put a stop to this business right away!"

"What's been keepin' ye so long?"

"Got into a little rumpus with an old enemy down to Greenville. Had a fight with him, knocked the stuff out of him, and got locked up and fined. The feller was one of Sturtevant's bosses last year. Tried to order me round. Well, when they order Zeb Piper round, they've got to have more authority than old Sturtevant can give!"

Thus it happened that when Dick and Brad returned with the recaptured head of the moose they found Piper at camp. He congratulated them on recovering the head, but expressed regret that they had not secured the entire animal.

"Don't you let that snip, Sturtevant, give you no bluff, boys," said the guide. "He ain't got no right to order you off. His father's timber land don't run none south of Twin Camps. Them cabins is on the south limit of his territory. When he comes down here and gits obstropulous, he's off his bounds."

"I'm glad to know that," said Dick. "Are you sure about it?"

"Dead sartin. You kin bank on it. Furder than that, old Sturtevant is goin' to have his troubles right away. Two or three companies have joined in suits agin' him. Then there's the North Carry Railroad

Company — they're going to push their business through. Two or three of them was down to Greenville. They was mighty busy, I tell you. I'll have something to say to young Sturtevant the fust time I see him."

During the remainder of the day the boys had sport with the ice-boat, which Dick managed with the skill of an expert. It was great fun skimming over the frozen surface of the lake at hair-lifting speed. At times the windward runner would rise high from the ice, and the sensation was like that of flying through the air. The cold wind cut their faces and hummed past their ears. Beneath them the glassy ice seemed shooting backward with dizzying speed.

One trip like this proved to be enough for Obediah. On getting off safely, he announced that he had found it necessary to keep his teeth shut all the time in order to hold his heart in his mouth.

"The dratted thing kept jumpin' jest like a frog," gulped the fat boy. "Thought I was goin' to lose it sure. No, siree, can't git me onto that ice-bo't ag'in!"

Late in the afternoon, after casting a discontented eye heavenward and seeming to make a general estimation of weather conditions, Piper announced in a displeased manner that things were beginning to "soften up" again and snow might fall.

"You boys that like ice-bo'tin' better put in all you kin of it to-day," he said. "No knowing but we'll have a ripsnorter of an old storm to-morrer. Anyhow, I think there's goin' to be snow."

"Well, say," cried Buckhart, "this yere shifting weather of Maine in January just about keeps a galoot guessing! What do you say, pard; shall we take one last cruise to-night?"

"Come on," cried Dick; "we'll take a good one while we're about it."

"Git back by dark, boys," urged Piper. "If you don't, you may not be able to find the camp."

They crossed to the eastern side of the lake on the ice-boat, and then bore away to the north. The pleasure was so great and their enjoyment of it so intense that neither noticed passing time or threatening weather conditions. Finally, as they were returning, a snow-squall came suddenly upon them and enfolded them in a whirling mass of white.

This squall passed, but it was followed by others.

In the midst of one of these thick snow flurries both lads were startled and filled with wonderment by hearing a strange, wailing shriek that came from some uncertain point on the surface of the great lake. Buckhart, stretched well out on the windward runner, which

had lifted clear of the ice, turned his head inquiringly toward Dick, but no words passed between them.

Again that terrible blood-chilling shriek smote their ears, and suddenly, directly before them a huge, monstrous shape loomed dimly in the driving storm. It looked like a juggernaut of death, belching smoke and shrieking wildly as its spiked driving wheels revolved grindingly over the ice.

It was a locomotive! But the sight of such a thing there on the surface of the lake, far from any railroad, seemed like a hallucination of a disordered brain.

Quick as thought, Dick shifted the rudder slightly. The ice-boat swerved in a twinkling, and they shot past the grim monster, barely averting a collision.

On they went, and when they turned to look back a moment later, the strange black shape had vanished in the storm.

CHAPTER XVI.

TIMBER WOLVES—A RACE FOR LIFE.

There were a dozen snow flurries ere nightfall, but in them all less than an inch of snow actually fell, and this the driving wind swept from the ice or piled up in long reefs where there were cracks or rough places.

On the following morning Mortimer Sturtevant surveyed the surface of the lake with a show of satisfaction. Oscar Flutterby and Dave Crabtree were with him.

"The skating isn't spoiled by any means," said Mortimer. "By avoiding those snow reefs, we can go almost anywhere we like. I'm going up North Carry way to-day. I'm going to find out if my suspicions are right. I swear I saw the thing between two of those snow flurries last night."

"But it can't be possible, Mortimer," said Crabtree. "How could they run a locomotive across the lake?"

"Oh, I know they planned to do so. They fitted spiked rims on the driving wheels. The spikes would bite into the ice, and there was some arrangement by which they could guide the thing. That's the way they expected to get that locomotive up to the head of the lake. Father thought it was a crazy scheme, but I believe they've carried it through. Anyhow I'm going to find out."

"That'th wight, Mortimer," lisped Flutterby. "I don't blame you one bit, deah boy. The idea of anybody twying to build a wailwoad up there in the woodth! It'th thimply ridiculouth."

"It's not so ridiculous if they can succeed in building the road. The old man says it will hurt him, and he's

done everything he could to stop it. You're a good skater, Oscar. It's one of your particular accomplishments. I'll take you with me."

"All wight, deah boy," said Flutterby, highly pleased. "I thall conthider it a gweat pleathure, I athure you."

It was near noon, however, when Sturtevant and Flutterby set out, their companions cheering them as they skated away.

The afternoon was fully half spent when they reached the head of the lake, and Sturtevant expressed regret that they would have so little time for investigation if they were to return to camp before nightfall.

Not a trace of the locomotive did they find, although they skirted the northern shore for a long distance and finally turned up a frozen stream.

On both banks of this stream the pines stood thick and tall, spreading a gloomy shadow along their path. Their skates rang with every stroke.

Finally Sturtevant stopped.

"It's foolishness going any farther up here," he said. "They didn't bring the locomotive this way, or we'd seen some traces of its spikes on the ice. We'll go back."

"I think we'd better, Mortimer," said Oscar. "Didn't you hear that thtwange thound a thort time ago?"

"No. What was it?"

"I don't know, but it thounded thomething like a dawg barking. Ah! there it ith again!"

Sturtevant started a bit and betrayed signs of alarm.

"That was a timber wolf," he said. "We'd better get out onto the open lake. Great Scott! there's another one, and the creature isn't far off! He seems to be further down the stream. Come on, Oscar, and hit it up lively!"

Dashing down the stream, they went swinging round a curve, and Flutterby uttered an exclamation, calling attention to a grayish shape that was flitting along the snow-bank, keeping abreast of them.

"It's a wolf, so help me!" cried Sturtevant. "Hear that howl! Heavens, Oscar, he's calling his mates!"

Their blood ran cold in their veins, for they had heard of the occasional savageness of the gray wolves of the Great North Woods. At times, when driven to despair by hunger, these creatures gather in packs and do not hesitate to attack human beings.

Glancing apprehensively to the right and left, Sturtevant soon discovered another gray shape that was speeding along on the opposite bank, also keeping up with them.

And now behind them, from various parts of the forest, both near and far, came the barking howls of many wolves.

"Oh, deah! oh, deah!" half sobbed Flutterby. "I'm thure we'll be cawt! I know we'll be eaten up by the horwid thingth! I with I hadn't come!"

"Save your breath, you fool!" advised Sturtevant. "You'll need it! Faster, Oscar—faster!"

"I'm thkating jutht ath fatht ath I can!" panted Flutterby.

Suddenly, as if by a well understood signal, the wolves on either bank darted out onto the ice. Sturtevant yelled to Flutterby, urging him on, and the two boys barely succeeded in shooting ahead of the creatures as they closed in. One of the wolves leaped at Sturtevant, who darted aside at precisely the right instant. A snarl of disappointment came from the animal as it missed its intended victim.

"Watch out, Oscar!" warned Mortimer. "When they spring at you, dodge! They have to run straight ahead on the ice. Can't turn quickly."

He glanced back and found to his dismay that there were three wolves, another having joined the first two. With lolling tongues and gleaming eyes, the fierce animals came on in pursuit.

"Why didn't we bring weapons?" thought Sturtevant. "What fools we were!"

He was badly frightened himself, and he knew Flutterby must be in a pitiful condition. Still the fear of death spurred Oscar on, and he skated as never before in all his life.

Finally they swept round a curve, and saw before them, with untold relief, the gray surface of the open lake.

"Mortimer!" called a weak voice; "Mortimer, deah boy, I'm all in! I'm gone! Good-by! Tell the fellowth how I died!"

"Hit it up! hit it up!" shouted Sturtevant. "Here's the lake!"

Flutterby made one last desperate struggle. They flashed out on the open lake, with the three wolves still clinging close to their heels.

"Curse the beasts!" panted Sturtevant. "I thought they'd quit it!"

Then he gave a shout, for, close at hand and bearing down upon them, came an ice-boat, upon which were two boys. The lads on the boat shouted at them.

At this moment Flutterby caught a skate in a shelly piece of ice, and went sprawling and sliding along the shining surface.

A rifle cracked, and one of the three wolves whirled over and over a dozen times, shot fairly through the body.

Immediately the other two turned tail and made for the shore.

It was Brad Buckhart who had fired, and he proceeded to send several more shots after the retreating animals, although only the first bullet proved effective. The wolves disappeared, and the ice-boat swerved on its course, coming round with a scraping sound as it handed into the wind and drew near Flutterby, who was sitting up dazedly, both hands clasped to his head.

"Hello, Sturtevant!" called Merriwell. "Apparently you've been having some excitement."

"I should say we had!" gasped Mortimer. "By Jove, Merriwell, I'm glad you fellows showed up! It's a mighty lucky thing for Flutterby, anyhow. Think I

could have dodged the creatures out here, but he was down."

Realizing he was safe at last, Oscar Flutterby burst into tears.

"I'm going wight home!" he sobbed. "I don't like it one bit up here in the th horwid woodth!"

"That's a good idea," said Buckhart. "Hike home to marmar, baby. Hold her, Dick, while I get my wolf."

"We'll take you fellows on," said Merriwell. "I think we can carry you, all right. You must be pretty well pumped out by this time."

Sturtevant skated over to the ice-boat and paused. For a moment he seemed to hesitate, but finally he said:

"Merriwell, you're all right, and I suppose I've been all wrong. I'm sorry. You can have the rest of that moose, or any old thing you want that I possess."

"Well, now that's rather decent," smiled Dick. "Give us your hand, Sturtevant. We'll bury the hatchet."

They shook hands.

THE END.

The Next Number (510) Will Contain

DICK MERRIWELL'S POLO TEAM;

OR,

The Rattlers of the Roller Rink.

Friends and Enemies—Trouble in the Polo League—Winchester Presents His New Team—Dick Disposes of a Masher—Forced to Fight—The Encounter—The Arrival at Rockland—Dick's Suspicions—The Great Augustus P.—Nabbed by the Police—The Truth of the Crooked Business—Winchester Makes the Truth Known—Not at all Satisfactory—A Game Worth Winning.

Beware of cheap imitations of the Tip Top Weekly. Frank and Dick Merriwell and their friends appear only in the pages of Tip Top. **BURT L. STANDISH** writes exclusively for Tip Top and has been the author of the **ONLY** and **ORIGINAL** Merriwell stories for over nine years.

About the Early Numbers of **Tip Top Weekly**

We receive hundreds of letters every week from readers asking if we can supply the early numbers of Tip Top containing Frank's adventures. In every case we are obliged to reply that numbers 1 to 300 are entirely out of print.

We would like to call the attention of our readers to the fact that the Frank Merriwell Stories now being published in book form in the Medal Library are inclusive of these early numbers. The first book to appear was No. 150 entitled "Frank Merriwell's Schooldays."

We give herewith a complete list of all the stories that have been published in book form up to the time of writing. We will be glad to send a fine colored cover catalogue of the Medal Library which is just filled with good things for boys, upon receipt of a one-cent stamp to cover postage.

The Price of The Merriwell Books is Ten Cents per Copy. At all Newsdealers

Frank Merriwell at Yale.	Medal No. 205.	10c.
Frank Merriwell Down South.	Medal No. 189.	10c.
Frank Merriwell in Camp.	Medal No. 258.	10c.
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Frank Merriwell's Hunting Tour.	Medal No. 292.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Loyalty.	Medal No. 197.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's New Comedian.	Medal No. 254.	10c.
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Frank Merriwell's Trip West.	Medal No. 280.	10c.
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	Medal No. 262.	10c.



NEW YORK, January 13, 1906.

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STREET & SMITH'S TIP TOP WEEKLY,
79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

TIP TOP ROLL OF HONOR.

Following the suggestion of Mr. Burt L. Standish, that appeared in his letter to Tip Top readers in No. 480, the following loyal Tip Toppers have won for themselves a place on our Honor Roll for their efforts to increase the circulation of the King of Weeklies. Get in line boys and girls and strive to have your name at the head of the list.

William Alkire, 295 Laurel St., Bridgeton, N. J.
Z. T. Layfield, Jr., Montgomery, Ala.
J. G. Byrum, Chattanooga, Tenn.
Wm. Schwartz, New York City.
Edw. W. Pritner, Curelsville, Pa.
H. D. Morgan, Indianapolis, Ind.
Wm. A. Cottrell, Honolulu, H. I.
J. (Pop) H., Birmingham, Ala.
Roy R. Ball, 902 Olive Street, Texarkana
Fred F. Blake, 1512 E. 10 St., Kansas City, Mo.

The names of other enthusiastic Tip Toppers will be added from time to time. Send in the result of your efforts to push the circulation of your favorite weekly and win a place on the Roll of Honor.

APPLAUSE.

Owing to the number of letters received, the editors of Tip Top cannot undertake to secure their publication under six weeks. Those who contribute to this department must not expect to see them before that time.

I have read Tip Top for a long time, and am doing my best to increase its circulation among Canadian boys. Please send me a Tip Top catalogue whether you publish this letter or not. Will you please answer the following question: Does Dick Merriwell appear in No. 1 of Tip Top? If not, what is the first number in which we hear of him?

I would like to exchange Canadian souvenir postal cards with any readers who will send me one.

Wishing success to the king of weeklies, I am, yours truly,
Chatham, Ontario, Canada. NORMAN SHERWOOD.

Dick Merriwell does not appear in the stories till the issue No. 275; but it is impossible to furnish you with a copy, as all numbers of the TIP TOP WEEKLY from No. 1 to 304 are out of print.

Our hearts are filled with sadness and despair,
Life seems a cheerless void, for where art thou,
O Cap'n Wiley, source of marvels? How
We miss your anecdotes beyond compare,
Those fascinating tales that banished care
And placed immortal fame upon thy brow.
Their like was never known before, I vow,
So wondrously outré, bizarre and rare.

We miss you, Cap'n Wiley. Won't you please
Return once more, O raconteur of fame,
Beside whose yarns those of Munchausen tame,
Before whose badinage all ennui flees?
Pray heed our plea, O soul adventuresome,
A royal welcome waits you. Cap'n, come.

New York City.

ARCHER.

Such a touching appeal should bring Cap'n Wiley back to delight his readers with more of his wonderful yarns.

I see very few letters in Applause from this city, although there are lots of readers of that book, which is rightly named Tip Top.

About one year ago a friend stopped at the news-depot and bought a copy before calling in the evening, showed it to me, and praised it so highly that I finally agreed to read it; did so, and thought so well of it that I began to buy back numbers. At present have all numbers from 1 to date, also lot of duplicates.

If any of Tip Top readers want back numbers, they can get them by writing to me. Hoping this may not reach you on a cool morning, when you are in need of kindling to start a fire, with regards to Mr. Standish and Street & Smith, I am, yours truly,
MISS DORA DEMAR.

Bridgeton, N. J.

When your letter reached us the fire had been started, so it failed to be put to the use you dreaded. In any case, it would be saved from such a fate, as we were too anxious to have it for the Applause column.

One night, while sleeping,
I dreamed a dream so sweet.
I thought that all my schoolmates
Again I did meet.

The first young college mate
To grasp me by the hand
Was that young athlete,
Frank Merriwell so grand.

The second, Bart Hodge,
The hot-headed lad
Who, a long time ago,
Turned to good from bad.

Then came Bruce Browning,
The big, lazy youth,
Who than do a bit of work
Would rather lose a tooth.

Then I saw Frank's friends—
I could not name them all.
We chatted some time
About baseball.

And the next morning,
When I was looking over my post,
I came across my Tip Top,
The weekly I love the most.

And I read about Dick,
A dandy and a swell;
But he'll never come up
To our hero,

Frank Merriwell.

Please send me a catalogue of TIP TOP. Yours truly,
Stamford, Tex. JACK LEE.

We will send you a catalogue in the course of a few days.

Allow me, if I am that much in luck to have this escape the waste-basket, to express my views of Tip Top. In the first

place, the name could not be improved by a change. Second, the author will never be replaced by a better one. Frank and Dick are models for any "true Tip Topper." Hoping the waste-basket is out of reach, I wish luck to Burt L. and all concerned in TIP TOP,
Seward, Neb.

All TIP TOP readers have taken Frank and Dick as models because they represent the true manly spirit of our American youth.

I have been a reader of the world-renowned TIP TOP for two years and a half, during which time I have found many an hour well spent in reading.

The characters are fine, and they can't be beaten.

I like the old flock the best, as I have read a great many issues that tell all about them.

I have read every Medal Library printed of Frank Merriwell, also a number of other weekly publications, but I have given them up for the old reliable TIP TOP. A little over nine years in existence, I have missed six years and a half of the best reading I can think of. Frank, Bart, Bruce, Dick, Smart, and Flint are my favorites. Hoping this will miss the waste-basket, as this is the first letter I have written, I will get the TIP TOP every week, if I have to borrow money to get it with. Remaining a loyal TIP Topper,
H. J. WHITTALL.

Philadelphia, Pa.

The Quaker City has always been one of the strongholds of TIP TOP, and here is a letter proving that Frank and Dick have another staunch friend among Philadelphia readers.

I have been a constant reader of the king of weeklies for about two years.

I have never seen a letter from here, so I made up my mind a dozen times that I would give my opinion of your paper. I have started many a letter, but have never finished one yet.

You Americans think that you own Frank. I think we have as good a claim on him. He is all right, from his feet upward. Did Frank ever make a trip to Eastern Ontario? I wish he would. We would give him just as royal a welcome as we gave Sir Wilfred Laurier. I live about fifteen miles northwest of Brockville, on the St. Lawrence, right in the daisy county of Ontario. I would gladly change picture post-cards with any one. I remain, yours to the last,
"AN ATHENIAN BOY."

P. O. Box 5061, Athens, Ontario.

We have no doubts about your ability to give Frank a royal reception when he visits your part of Canada. And he will be so glad to see you, too. Frank likes Canadians, and he has a large number of friends among them. We will tell Frank how anxious you are to see him.

I have read TIP TOP for about three years, and though I can't be termed a veteran reader now, I expect to be some day. Of the characters of TIP TOP, I like Brad the best, with Dick a close second.

Methinks I'd like to gather up

The hours of other days,
Or take TIP TOPS from the shelf,
And o'er their pages gaze.

To hear Frank's well-remembered voice,

In simple, playful jest;

His sober talk and gentle ways—

Ah! 'twould my spirit rest.

I often think of the happy past,

Of a mother and a home.

I think of dear old TIP TOP, too,

As through this world I roam.

I love to read the stories o'er

Of jolly boys now men;

To read of Merry and faithful Bart—

Pictures of Burt L.'s pen.

This is my first attempt to praise your excellent weekly, but my brother has written twice, one of his letters being published. Yours,
M. M. HAZELTINE.

433 South Arizona Street, Butte, Mont.

This rhyme has a swing to it that will appeal to our readers. We compliment you on your first attempt to praise TIP TOP.

Well done, good and faithful reader. It isn't every day that we get such spirited verse from the great copper city.

Just got into town for the first time in four months, and am going to spend fifteen or twenty cents on myself. I might just as well have a good time while I am at it.

I am going to buy the latest TIP TOP out, and sit up all night and read it.

My little brother Ernest likes to look at the pictures on the front, but Fritzie is going to read this one.

Dick Merriwell is just like me—good-looking, athletic, smart, and a good scrapper. Brad don't know how to talk right, but he's a pretty good scrapper at that. I suppose he can't help it if he is tongue-tied.

Would like to see Frank and his team play Dick's. I think Dick's would win, 'cause married men can't play ball only with baby when he cries.

But say, if I don't stop pretty soon, this will be too long to be printed.

Tell Dick and Brad I'm coming down to see them some time, and when I do I'll sing this song:

There's two young men called Dick and Brad,

Each one is a true and handsome lad.

When on the field they play good ball,

And defeat their opponents big or small.

They play almost as good as me;

I can throw the ball as high as a tree.

But let's give them both a jolly good cheer,

And also the rest of their crowd so dear.

Hanoverneck, N. J.

FRED LUDY.

So you have been out of town these last four months? Of course you had the latest TIP TOP in your pocket all the time. There is really no need of asking such a question of a faithful TIP Topper like you. One certainly has a good time when reading TIP TOP; it's the time of one's life. If you are just like Dick, you're a paragon, and must feel very proud when the people in your town point and say as you pass by: "There goes Dick Merriwell, the second!" Dick and Brad have been informed of your proposed visit and are preparing to give you a royal reception.

I have been a constant reader of your excellent weekly, the TIP TOP.

I followed Dick for three years, and I think the boy or girl who follows the course of Dick cannot help but become a manly and self-reliant man.

His partner, Brad Buckhart, his bosom friend, likes to talk a good deal, but Dick couldn't have a truer friend than he; he is as true as steel.

My favorites of the girls are Doris and June. June is for Dick, while Doris belongs to Hal.

Rob Rioden belongs to the same class as Chester Arlington. If Rob Rioden had treated his bulldog right he would have had a friend as true as steel in Dick.

When the time comes and Chester Arlington cuts out his bad habits and becomes a man he will have a great many friends.

There was a certain person by the name of Brown Eyes, who said she would be glad to hear from any one who wished to correspond with her. You may put my name on her list.

I am collecting souvenir postals, and would be glad to exchange with any one.

I remain, a faithful TIP Topper, HAROLD F. THAYER.
730 East Forty-seventh Street, Chicago, Ill.

In a previous issue we announced that "Brown Eyes" had requested that no more letters be sent to her, as she has been receiving so many it is a physical impossibility to try to answer one-half of them. But there are other readers who perhaps would like to receive letters from your part of the country.

I have been a reader of TIP TOP since its first number, and each and every issue has been a most welcome treat to me. The description of every event is told in such an interesting and convincing manner that it is quite plain and instructive to the reader. Each character portrayed seems true to life and as though you were reading of friends who would do exactly the same identical things. The store of wit and humor in TIP TOP

appeals to all who like a hearty laugh to help lighten the cares of every-day life. It surely is the only proper reading-matter for the thoughtful American boys and girls. I would be pleased to exchange souvenir card views with TIP TOP readers, and will send the best to be had of Allegheny and Pittsburg. Here's wishing long life to Burt L. Standish, Street & Smith, and all the crew of the good old ship, TIP TOP, GEORGE B. WELSH.
948 North Avenue, Allegheny, Pa.

You have summed up the attractive features of TIP TOP very neatly. And a reader, who has bought the weekly for the last ten years deserves to have his name placed on the Roll of Honor.

As I have read TIP TOP WEEKLY from No. 1 to date, I think it is about time I was writing a few words to let you know what I think about it. I feel as if I were going to Fardale Academy with Dick Merriwell, I am so interested in him. I would like to start a correspondence club, and I would also like to exchange souvenir postal cards with any Tip Topper. Would you please send me a Tip Top catalogue? My idols are Frank, Dick, Brad, Bart, Bruce, Bob, Little "Smart" Alec, and last, but not least, Dick Starbright. Of the girls, I like Elsie, Inza, Doris, Felicia, and last, but not least, dear June. I have a sister named June, and she is the very image of what I think June Arlington is. Well, hoping this will pass the waste-basket, I will close, with three cheers for all concerned in TIP TOP,

WILL G. BECKWITH.

1604 Staunton Avenue, Parkersburg, W. Va.

This reader from the Mountain State has a host of friends among the various characters. May you always be on good terms with them. A catalogue of our publications will be mailed you at an early date.

Being an enthusiastic reader of TIP TOP since the first copy I read, which was mailed me by my brother from Tupelo, Miss., I wish to write and express my opinion of the great weekly. If all the weeklies were like TIP TOP they would be the only fiction for the business man or boy to read, as they are short, interesting, and to the point. For instance, a boy cannot carry bound novels to his work, and when he goes home at night he generally reads about a dozen or two pages and puts it away for the next time; this keeps him from reading other books or stories when he wants to, while TIP TOP can be carried in the pocket easily. With three cheers for Burt L. Standish, Street & Smith, and TIP TOP, I remain, an ardent Tip Topper,
Gordo, Ala.

WILBUR ARMSTRONG.

Wherever you go you will see TIP TOPS. A copy can be folded and put away in one's pocket. This makes it very convenient, and a reader can always have it handy when he feels like reading, no matter where he may be.

Words cannot express the feeling we have for the "king of all weeklies." Frank and Dick are splendid fellows and good models for every American boy. Of the girls appearing in the TIP TOP WEEKLY, we like June the best, and hope we will hear more of her. But, of course, Mr. Standish knows best how to manage those things.

THE TWO BLONDES.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

The way in which the boys of America have taken to the TIP TOP WEEKLY ever since it first appeared shows that Frank and Dick are indeed models of noble, inspiring manhood.

I have not been buying the TIP TOP for more than a month, but my brother bought it, and I could hardly wait for him to get through. I think TIP TOP is the king of weeklies. I love Frank and Inza. Inza was just the one for Frank, and I am glad he got her. I only hope Dick will get June. I have always wished that Chet Arlington would become Dick's friend, but it does not seem possible. However, we cannot criticize Mr. Standish a particle, as he is the king of writers. My favorites of Frank's flock are Frank, Bart, Bruce B., Harry R., Hans D., Barney M., Jack R., and Jack Diamond. Of Dick's flock, I like Dick, Brad, Gardner, Singleton, Hal D., and Obediah Tubbs. Of the girls, I like Inza, Elsie, June, Doris, and Nadia, who is just the one for Brad.

I was very sorry that Elsie was sick, so they could not have a double wedding. But she will soon be better, and then Bart

will be happy. Where is Inza, and when is she coming in the story? Has Frank been dropped out?

I would like to trade postal cards if some one will.

Three cheers for TIP TOP, and Frank and Dick Merriwell, Burt L. Standish and Street & Smith. Hoping to see this in print, I remain, a true Tip Topper,
M. BURR.
190 New York Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

All the favorite characters who appear to drop out will be brought on the scene again, from time to time, when Mr. Standish sees a fitting opportunity. Of course we cannot predict just what number it will be, but it is safe to say that they will appear at intervals.

I take the pleasure of writing more praise of the TIP TOP WEEKLY. It has been over a year since I have written a letter saying how much I enjoy the TIP TOP WEEKLY.

I think it is a grand idea of Mr. Standish's in enrolling the names of TIP TOP readers in the back of TIP TOP each week. I have been reading the TIP TOP WEEKLY since it has been published, and I am forced to say that it is getting better and more interesting each week.

My folks all spend very enjoyable evenings reading Mr. Standish's works. Now, what I wish to say is that I have noticed in the past year that there are lots of the readers who have not had the pleasure of reading the back numbers.

Now if any of the ladies reading this interesting weekly desire any of the back numbers, and they wish to correspond with me, will they kindly write to me, and I will send such numbers as they desire,
CHAS. A. SMITH.

521 Garfield Building, Chicago, Ill.

TIP TOP is getting better each week, as you say. It has always been the best of the five-cent weeklies, but, for all that, we are introducing features, with the purpose of making it better than ever before.

I have read TIP TOP for eight years, along with many other books by various authors, but find TIP TOP the best publication to be obtained.

I will now try and dispose of the characters to every one's satisfaction. Each one has a place and fills it admirably.

I love to read of their college days, their struggles and triumphs, until at last success crowns their careers. I love to read of their travels in foreign countries, where thrilling adventures confront them at every turn.

I am a stamp and coin collector; also will exchange souvenir cards with any one who desires it.

How many of you TIP TOP readers will write to me, especially the fair sex? I will endeavor to answer all letters addressed to me.

The waste-basket claimed my letters before. Hoping this one better success, I will close, with best wishes to Street & Smith and Burt L., remaining,
CLARENCE WILSON.

Joplin, Mo.

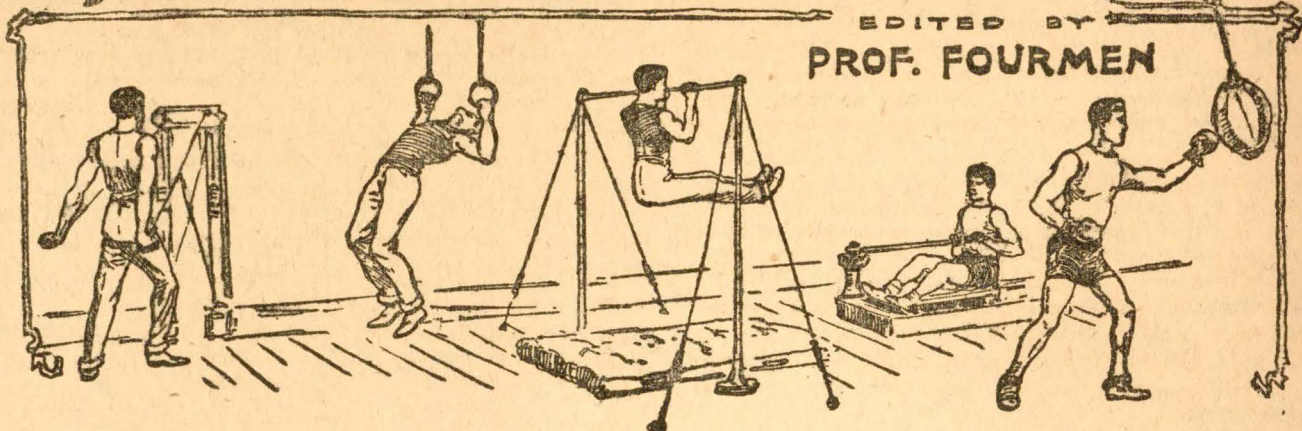
It is very interesting to read about the numerous adventures of our heroes, and follow their careers from their earliest school-days to the present time. It makes the best kind of reading.

I have only been reading TIP TOP WEEKLY, the best of publications, for about four months, but I take the liberty to write to the Applause column. I think that the TIP TOP is the best book ever printed for the money, and I never begrudge the five cents I pay for it, because I get my money's worth. I like Frank, Dick, Brad, Bart, Tubbs, Darrell, Rattleton, Jollyby and the rest of their chums. I would like to see Chet Arlington become Dick's friend. I do not think he is a bad boy at heart; it is nothing but jealousy. I am in favor of starting a correspondence club between the TIP TOP readers. A button could be made, with T. T. C. C. on it, standing for Tip Top Correspondence Club. If any one wishing to exchange postal cards will send me one they will receive an answer by return mail. Doris is the girl for Dick. Please forward me a catalogue. Hoping to see this fetter in print in a short time, and success to Burt L. Standish and Street & Smith, I am, yours,
CHAS. B. TANNER.
717 Rhode Island Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C.

A catalogue will be mailed to you in a few days. Your idea of a TIP TOP club is not a bad one. We will see what other readers have to say about the plan.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

EDITED BY
PROF. FOURMEN



PROF. FOURMEN: My measurements are: Age, 10 years; height, 4 feet 2 inches; weight, 60 pounds; chest, 25 inches; expanded, 26 inches; calves, 10 inches; neck, 10 inches; shoulders, 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches; biceps, 8 inches; reach, 19 inches; forearm, 6 inches; upper arm, 7 inches; thigh, 15 inches; waist, 24 inches; ankle, 9 inches; arm, 8 inches; wrist, 5 inches. 1. Is boxing a good exercise? 2. What are my weak points? 3. How can I develop them?

Brooklyn, N. Y.

M. RYSKIND.

Boxing is always good, for every muscle is brought into play. Go on with the boxing for general exercise, but use pulley weights and light dumb-bells to increase the size of the biceps and chest.

PROF. FOURMEN: My measurements are: Age, 12 years 5 months; weight, 70 pounds; height, 4 feet 8 inches; calves, 12 inches; neck, 12 inches; shoulders, 13 inches across; chest, 28 inches; expanded, 30 inches; wrist, 6 inches; thigh, 16 inches; waist, 24 inches; lower arm, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; upper arm, 9 inches; biceps, 9 inches; arm, 8 inches; reach, 24 inches; ankle, 9 inches. 1. Is punching the bag a good exercise? 2. What are my weak points? 3. How can I develop them?

Brooklyn, N. Y.

I. DRANOW.

Continue the bag punching for developing the arms and chest. The neck and calves are of a good size, but try to improve your chest and waist. What you need is an all-around course in a gymnasium.

PROF. FOURMEN: I am 14 years 10 months old and weigh 103 pounds. My height is 5 feet 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; neck, 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; chest, expanded, 32 inches; normal, 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; waist, 28 inches; muscle of arms, normal, 10 inches; drawn up, 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; upper part of legs, 18 inches; below the knees, 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; above the ankles, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. 1. How are my measurements? I am a very good baseball pitcher, but cannot throw a swift ball. 2. Where can I learn to throw it? 3. I am a very poor runner. How can I remedy this? 4. Is my weight right for my age? Please do not throw it in the waste-basket because I am a Mexican, for I love the United States like my own country.

Baltimore, Md.

JUAN DIAZ.

P. S.—I am very sorry one of my countrymen made trouble for Frank—like Del Norte.

Have no fear; your letter will not go in the waste-basket because you are a Mexican. We have no antipathies. The readers of the TIP TOP WEEKLY are in every clime, and they form one large happy family. We have a large number of Mexican readers and they are among the most loyal Tip Toppers, you yourself included. You should weigh more for your age, and probably will before reaching your full growth.

To learn how to pitch a baseball practise throwing a "straight" ball before attempting any speed; and then go on with the curves. You will find that speed will come gradually as you master the intricacies of the art and as your arm develops strength. Short wind may be the cause of your poor running. Take deep-

breathing exercises at first. Then try running short distances—one and two hundred yards. Later on increase the distance as you feel able to run over a long course without tiring yourself. Don't run too fast; what you should seek is endurance.

PROF. FOURMEN: I am 15 years old, 5 feet 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height and weigh 100 pounds. Chest, normal, 30 inches; expanded, 31 inches; biceps, 10 inches; neck, 12 inches; wrists, 6 inches; waist, 26 inches; from shoulder to shoulder, 16 inches; thighs, 17 inches; calves, 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; ankles, 7 inches; forearms, 9 inches. These are my records: Fifty-yard dash, 7 seconds; half-mile run, 3 minutes 35 seconds; mile run, 7 minutes 47 seconds; can chin 20 times; can stoop over and touch the floor, with legs straight, 100 times in twenty minutes; raise myself up on toes 100 times; lying on the floor I can bend over and touch toes 25 times; can squat 150 times; can push five-pound dumb-bell over my head 100 times; can touch floor with knee bent 7 times; can put a four-pound shot 40 feet 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; standing broad jump, 7 feet 8 inches; running broad jump, 13 feet 1 inch; running high jump, 3 feet 5 inches. 1. How are my measurements? 2. How are my records? 3. Do you think I would make a good athlete? 4. What are my weak points? 5. What are my strong points? Please excuse this long letter, as I am one of the old readers. Any one wishing to correspond with me will please send letters to the address below. I remain,

L. BRANDT.

829 Stevenson Street, San Francisco, Cal.

You should weigh more and have a larger chest development. The records you have sent me show that you are trying hard to test your endurance as much as possible. Be careful about overdoing any exercise. If you tire yourself out by continuing to exercise when nature has given the warning signal to rest, the results will be harmful instead of beneficial. There is no reason why you shouldn't become an athlete if you take a regular course of gymnastics and develop your strong points properly.

PROF. FOURMEN: Having been a reader for several years I would like to ask a favor. Will you pass comment upon my measurements? Age, 16 years 5 months; height, 5 feet 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; weight, 126 pounds; chest, 32 inches; expanded, 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; wrists, 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches; calves, 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. I go in for all outdoor exercises. I do not use stimulants or narcotics. I have never been sick, but am short-winded. I remain, yours truly,

Jophin, Mo.

CLARENCE WILSON.

Your weight is good, but you lack chest development. Take deep-breathing exercises and use pulley weights. Play football and baseball, so that you will be in the open air as much as possible.

PROF. FOURMEN: I take the liberty to send you measurements of myself and chum. Mine are: Age, 17 years; height, 5 feet 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches; weight, 125 pounds; chest, normal, 32 inches; expanded, 34 inches; waist, 31 inches; thigh, 19 inches; ankle, 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; calf, 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; neck, 13 inches; wrist, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; forearm, 10 inches; bicep, expanded, 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. My chum's are the same, except his waist measures 33 inches; biceps are

10½ inches, expanded, and neck is 14 inches. Please point out weak and strong points, and how to remedy the weak ones.
Louisville, Ky.

TWO KENTUCKY COLONELS.

Both of you should develop more chest measurement. Your waist lacks one inch; his is one inch above normal. You and your friend should exercise with dumb-bells to enlarge your biceps. His neck is just right, but yours is one inch less.

PROF. FOURMEN: Would you be so kind as to answer two questions for me? 1. What is a sure cure for lame back? 2. What is good for weak wrists? Not having much time to spare on sports, please prescribe some other method. Respectfully,
West Jordan, Utah. J. CAMELFIELD.

1. Take bending exercises, followed by a hip bath and vigorous rubbing of small of the back with a rough towel.

2. Light dumb-bell exercise and pulley weights will strengthen weak wrists. Be carefully not to overdo it and stop when you begin to feel tired.

PROF. FOURMEN: Please criticize my measurements. Age, 16¼ years; height, 5 feet 5 inches; chest, normal, 30 inches; expanded, 33½ inches; biceps, 10¼ inches; wrist, 6½ inches; across shoulders, 17½ inches; waist, 27 inches; neck, 14 inches; forearm, 11 inches; thighs, 33½ inches; calves, 12½ inches; from hand to hand, 65½ inches; around head, 22½ inches. What should I weigh? How long should one exercise with two-pound dumb-bells? What will give one muscle in the forearm?
Norfolk, Va.

"CARMINE."

You should weight about one hundred and twenty-seven pounds. Ten minutes' exercise night and morning with dumb-bells will produce good results in six months' time. This, with bag punching, will develop the forearms.

PROF. FOURMEN: Being a constant reader of TIP TOP, I take the liberty of asking your opinion on my measurements. Age, 16 years; weight, 149 pounds; height, 5 feet 9 inches; neck, 15 inches; chest, normal, 38 inches; expanded, 40 inches; waist, 32 inches. How are my measurements for my age? What are my weak points? How can I strengthen them? Yours very truly,
A FAITHFUL READER OF THE KING OF WEEKLIES.
Koakum, Tex.

Your measurements show a good development. I cannot discover any weak points in you, except, perhaps, a slight deficiency in weight.

PROF. FOURMEN: I have been a steady reader of TIP TOP for the last six years, and must say that it is way ahead of all other weeklies. Now, professor, I would like you to answer some questions, for which I thank you a thousand times. I am just 18 years old; am 5 feet 8 inches in my stockings; breadth of shoulders, 18 inches; chest, 33 inches, normal; expanded, 37 inches; waist, 30 inches; thigh, 19 inches; calf, 14 inches; bicep, 10 inches; neck, 13¼ inches. These last two measurements are thorns, because with an 18-inch shoulder measurement and a 13¼-inch neck I look like the figure 1. 1. What do you think of my measurements? I am going into training now, and in six months I expect to have the following measurements: Chest, normal, 37 inches; shoulders, 20 inches, and neck, 15 inches. Do you think I can do it in six months, if I work hard? 2. In the increase of shoulder measurement, which part of the shoulder is affected, the muscle or fleshy part? 3. I understand that a cold bath is the best thing after exercise; but if a feeling of warmth cannot be retained, a warm shower and a cold sprinkle is just as good. Is this right? There is only one drawback in my training, and that is, I smoke cigarettes. Now I know you will say give them up; but I can't—for I've tried it. My will power is all gone from smoking, and I find it impossible to quit them. Hereafter, however, I'm going to smoke a pipe, and gradually cut down my use of tobacco until I can quit them altogether. 4. Is smoking a pipe as harmful as smoking cigarettes? If you will answer my questions you will be doing a great favor to a loyal Tip Topper. I will close, hoping that Burt L. Standish will forever continue to write these fine stories. Yours truly,
New York City. M. J. L., a Regular.

You should have sent your weight among the other measure-

ments. A great many correspondents have failed to give me a complete list of their measurements, invariably leaving out height or weight. I will take the opportunity now to ask all future readers of this column who expect to receive a full report upon their build and condition not to neglect sending me all their measurements. You, M. J. L., will probably be disappointed in not getting a satisfactory answer to your questions, and yet I am expected to be a mind reader and guess your height. I wish to urge upon all who seek my advice the necessity of sending in, at least, the important items of one's measurements. I speak of this because there have been so many lately who have neglected, through carelessness, probably, to observe this very important consideration. I wish very much to give all the athletic advice possible to my young friends, but they must bear in mind that I need their cooperation, and all I ask is that they observe the request I have just made.

1. It will be useless for you to go into training, expecting to obtain satisfactory results, if you continue to use tobacco. No ambitious athlete has ever reached the goal who did not train in strict accordance with the rigid requirements exacted by all the laws of health. If you cannot exert enough will-power to let tobacco in every form alone during the period of training it is no use to expect good results. Of course, exercise will always improve one's physical condition, even when it is handicapped by the exciting action of tobacco on the nervous system; but the aspiring athlete who is training with a definite purpose in view must cut out the use of tobacco absolutely. It is possible for you to increase your shoulders, chest and neck to the measurements you desire, but it will require hard work and patient training. You cannot set any definite time, as six months, to accomplish it; probably it will take longer. But that is no reason why you should not attempt it.

2. Your exercises will develop the muscles of the shoulders.

3. A tepid shower followed by a cold sprinkle is the best. Rub the skin with a rough Turkish towel till it has a pink glow, and there will be no danger of catching cold.

4. If you must smoke, by all means use a pipe; but, under no circumstances, smoke cigarettes. They are rightly named "coffin nails," and the inveterate cigarette smoker finds out when it is too late that he really has been driving nails in his coffin.

PROF. FOURMEN: If you would kindly express an opinion of my measurements I would be much obliged to you. Wrist, 6½ inches; forearm, 10¼ inches; biceps, 11 inches; neck, 13 inches; chest, normal, 31 inches; expanded, 34 inches; thigh, 19½ inches; calves, 13 inches; waist, 27½ inches. I am 13 years old and my height is 5 feet 5½ inches. What are my weak points, and how can I remedy them? When I jump on my left foot, my knee, just below the kneecap, hurts. How can I remedy that? Thanking you in advance, I remain, yours truly,
Pleasanton, Cal. CLINTON D. KEELER.

You seem to be a stocky boy, though I don't know how much you weigh. The trouble you complain of is probably due to a strain. Bathe the knee with witch-hazel for several days, keeping off your feet as much as possible. If there is no improvement you better consult your family physician.

"GOLDEN HOURS."

Boys, have you any old numbers of Golden Hours? If so, see what numbers are among them and write me, stating price. I will pay liberally to complete my files. Address WILLIAMS, Station "O," Box 24, New York City.

TIP TOP WEEKLY

CAUTION!

All readers of the Renowned Tip Top stories should beware of base imitations, placed upon the market under catch names very similar to Frank Merriwell, and intended to deceive.

- 472—Frank Merriwell's Handicap; or, Hastings, The Hurdler from Humboldt.
- 473—Frank Merriwell's Red Challengers; or, The Hot Game with the Nebraska Indians.
- 474—Frank Merriwell's Fencing; or, For Sport or For Blood.
- 475—Frank Merriwell's Backer; or, Playing Baseball for a Fortune.
- 476—Frank Merriwell's Endurance; or, The Cross-Country Champions of America.
- 477—Frank Merriwell in Form; or, Wolfers, the Wonder from Wisconsin.
- 478—Frank Merriwell's Method; or, The Secret of Becoming a Champion.
- 479—Frank Merriwell's Level Best; or, Cutting the Corners with a New Curve.
- 480—Frank Merriwell's Lacrosse Team; or, The Great Hustle with Johns Hopkins.
- 481—Frank Merriwell's Great Day; or, The Crowning Triumph of His Career.
- 482—Dick Merriwell in Japan; or, Judo Art Against Jiu-Jitsu.
- 483—Dick Merriwell on the Rubber; or, Playing Baseball in the Flowery Kingdom.
- 484—Dick Merriwell's Cleverness; or, Showing the Japs the American Game.
- 485—Dick Merriwell in Manila; or, Papinta, the Pride of the Philippines.
- 486—Dick Merriwell Marooned; or, The Queen of Fire Island.
- 487—Dick Merriwell's Comrade; or, The Treasure of the Island.
- 488—Dick Merriwell, Gap-Stopper; or, A Surprise for the Surprisers.
- 489—Dick Merriwell's Sacrifice Hit; or, Winning by a Hair's Breadth.
- 490—Dick Merriwell's Support; or, Backed Up When Getting His Bumps.
- 491—Dick Merriwell's Stroke; or, Swimming for His Life.
- 492—Dick Merriwell Shadowed; or, The Search for the Lost Professor.
- 493—Dick Merriwell's Drive; or, Evening Up with His Enemy.
- 494—Dick Merriwell's Return; or, The Reappearance at Fardale.
- 495—Dick Merriwell's Restoration; or, Whipping the Team into Shape.
- 496—Dick Merriwell's Value; or, The Success of Square Sport.
- 497—Dick Merriwell's "Dukes"; or, His Fight with Himself.
- 498—Dick Merriwell's Drop-Kick; or, Chester Arlington's Team of Tigers.
- 499—Dick Merriwell's Defeat; or, How Arlington Won the Second Game.
- 500—Dick Merriwell's Chance; or, Taming the Tigers of Fairport.
- 501—Dick Merriwell's Stride; or, The Finish of the Cross Country Run.
- 502—Dick Merriwell's Wing-Shift; or, The Great Thanksgiving Day Game.
- 503—Dick Merriwell's Skates; or, Playing Ice Hockey for Every Point.
- 504—Dick Merriwell's Four Fists; or, The Champion of the Chanson.
- 505—Dick Merriwell's Dashing Game; or, The Fast Five from Fairport.
- 506—Frank Merriwell's Tigers; or, Wiping Out the Railroad Wolves.
- 507—Frank Merriwell's Treasure Guard; or, The Defenders of the Pay Train.
- 508—Frank Merriwell's Flying Fear; or, The Ghost of the Yaqui.
- 509—Dick Merriwell in Maine; or, Sport and Peril in the Winter Woods.
- 510—Dick Merriwell's Polo Team; or, The Rattlers of the Roller Rink.
- 511—Dick Merriwell in the Ring; or, The Champion of His Class.
- 512—Frank Merriwell's New Idea; or, The American School of Athletic Development.
- 513—Frank Merriwell's Troubles; or, Enemies in the Fold.

Back numbers may be had from all newsdealers or will be sent, postpaid, by the publishers upon receipt of price

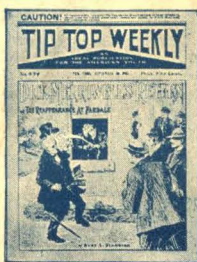
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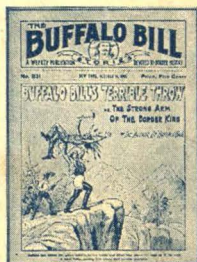
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TIP TOP WEEKLY

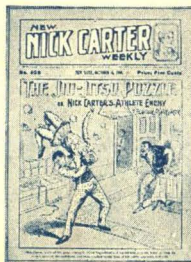
Frank and Dick Merriwell are two brothers whose adventures in college and on the athletic field are of intense interest to the American boy of to-day. They prove that a boy does not have to be a rowdy to have exciting sport.

Buffalo Bill Stories



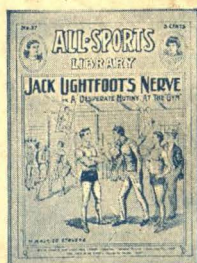
Buffalo Bill is the hero of a thousand exciting adventures among the Redskins. These are given to our boys only in the Buffalo Bill Stories. They are bound to interest and please you.

Nick Carter Weekly



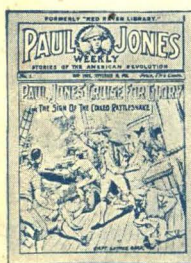
We know, boys, that there is no need of introducing to you Nicholas Carter, the greatest sleuth that ever lived. Every number containing the adventures of Nick Carter has a peculiar, but delightful, power of fascination.

All-Sports Library



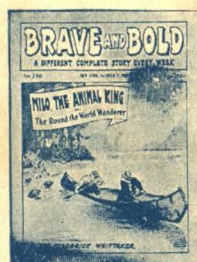
All sports that boys are interested in, are carefully dealt with in the All-Sports Library. The stories deal with the adventures of plucky lads while indulging in healthy pastimes.

Paul Jones Weekly



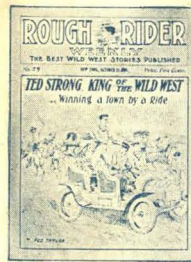
Do not think for a second, boys, that these stories are a lot of musty history, just sugar-coated. They are all new tales of exciting adventure on land and sea, in all of which boys of your own age took part.

Brave and Bold



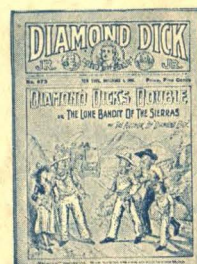
Every boy who prefers variety in his reading matter, ought to be a reader of Brave and Bold. All these were written by authors who are past masters in the art of telling boys' stories. Every tale is complete in itself.

Rough Rider Weekly



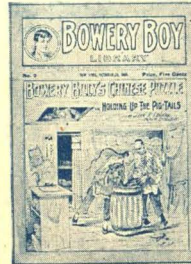
Ted Strong was appointed deputy marshal by accident, but he resolves to use his authority and rid his ranch of some very tough bullies. He does it in such a slick way that everyone calls him "King of the Wild West" and he certainly deserves his title.

Diamond Dick Weekly



The demand for stirring stories of Western adventure is admirably filled by this library. Every up-to-date boy ought to read just how law and order are established and maintained on our Western plains by Diamond Dick, Bertie, and Handsome Harry.

Bowery Boy Library



The adventures of a poor waif whose only name is "Bowery Billy." Billy is the true product of the streets of New York. No boy can read the tales of his trials without imbibing some of that resource and courage that makes the character of this homeless boy stand out so prominently.